महाभारत

The Mahabharata of Vyasa

BOOK VIII

THE COMPLETE KARNA PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

By P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Karṇa Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

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महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK EIGHT

The Complete Karṇa Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 400 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

[The complexity of Karṇa's character is a perpetual source of wonderment for admirers of Vyāsa. In my preface to the Udyoga Parva I have indicated my own bafflement. I have decided that the best way to preface the Karṇa Parva is to reproduce the excellent review by Pradip Bhattacharya of Kevin McGrath's *The Sanskrit Hero: Karṇa in Epic Mahābhārata* (E.J. Brill, 2004), published in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (2006).]

In this fascinating work, Kevin McGrath seeks to study how Karṇa has been portrayed as a heroic Āryan ideal from both archaic and classical viewpoints in the *Mahābhārata* and attempts to illustrate how the typology still obtains in modern society, as evinced in Rabindranath Tagore's poem on Karṇa and Kuntī composed in response to scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose's request to adopt Karṇa as mythic paradigm for the modern Indian and in songs about Karṇa in Gujarat celebrating him as a hero who brings water and fertility to the community. Even in Indian cinema, the tragic figure of Karṇa has a perennial appeal, his story being woven into various film scripts in modern guise. The Occidental Indologist's interest in Karṇa and the tendency to look upon him as the epic hero is understandable because he displays quite a few resemblances to Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad.* Both have special, divinely crafted armour; both have a celestial parent; both sulk and stand aside from the battle initially out of wounded *armour propre*; both are ultimately struck down by archers.

Adopting Stuart Blackburn's paradigm of epic etiology in contemporary India as developed by Gregory Nagy where the epic is seen as evolving from "uneven weighting" towards "even weighting," McGrath finds Karṇa's epic being subsumed under the weightier Arjuna-epic in the written tradition. Underlying their confrontation is an ancient Vedic substratum: the antagonism between Sūrya and Indra pointed out by Georges Dumézil (Indra detaches Sūrya's chariot wheel; Sūrya's natural mother abandons him, and the adoptive mother brings him up). McGrath does not notice that in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the same rivalry is perpetuated through Vālin and Sugrīva, the sons of Indra and Sūrya, respectively, the situation being reversed. It is Sūrya-Sugrīva who has Indra-Vālin slain by Viṣṇu-Rāma, while, usually, Viṣṇu helps Indra to slay his adversaries through a trick. This issue warrants deeper examination.

A good point made is that we never find out how the name of Karṇa is given. Adhiratha and Rādhā name him Vasuṣeṇa, and appropriately he is indiscriminately liberal, like the Sun. In a footnote, McGrath makes an important point that deserved exploration in the book: the only other "ear-ringed" heroes are Skanda and the Maruts. Indra makes the one general of the celestial host against the Titans and has the others as his assistants after an abortive attempt to destroy them in the womb. While in exile, Bhīma refers to the enemies being led by Karṇa as a helmsman steering the Dhṛtarāṣṭra boat across the raging sea of battle. In the same passage Skanda is celebrated as a great donor. Both unhesitatingly gift Indra what he

craves. McGrath does not, however, investigate why Karṇa becomes infused with the demon Naraka following Duryodhana's capture by the Gandharvas. In the eighteenth century Tullal songs of Kerala he is the demon Sahasrakavaca (thousand-armoured) reincarnated. No Indo-European hero has this demonic aspect. Yet, at the end of epic, Karṇa is very much a solar hero, celebrated by Kuntī as "A hero, ear-ringed, armoured, splendid like the Sun," seen by Yudhiṣṭhira as attended by twelve suns (*dvādaśāditya sahitam*) and finally merging with the Sun (*ravim*).

McGrath overlooks how Sūrya browbeats adolescent Kuntī into submitting to his sexual needs. It is a measure of her strength of character that even as an adolescent girl she is able to stand up to him partially and obtain boons ensuring her impaired virginity and her son being special. In this, she parallels her grandmother-in-law Matsyagandhā vis-à-vis the importunate Sage Parāśara. In saying that Karṇa is seen in action first when he accompanies Duryodhana to count cattle in the forest, McGrath forgets the confrontation in Draupadī's *svayaṃvara* where he retreats, astonished at the "Brāhmaṇa" Arjuna's bowmanship. Nor does he note that Karṇa's much-vaunted prowess is decisively undercut here as also twice more in the cattle-counting and rustling episodes, with which Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa taunt him. The contradiction between fidelity to Duryodhana as Karṇa's declared paramount value and his refusal to fight so long as Bhīṣma is in the field, and later not taking Yudhiṣṭhira prisoner despite having him at his mercy, also remains unexplored.

The most rewarding part of the book is McGrath's exploration of Karṇa's critical relationships. Like the typical epic hero, Karṇa has an opposite number who is designated as his "share": Arjuna. The parallelism is articulated in the very first appearance where Karṇa does all that Arjuna has displayed in the tournament and then challenges him to a duel. At Kurukṣetra they kill each other's sons. Karṇa is the only hero on the Kaurava side who converses with gods (Sūrya, Indra), as Yudhiṣṭhira does with Dharma and Kubera, Arjuna with Indra and Śiva. The Kṛṣṇa-Karṇa interaction before the war is a clear parallel to and a reversal of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna dialogue that follows. The difference, as McGrath points out, is that here it is Karṇa who tells Kṛṣṇa what is going to happen, including his own death, rising to an apocalyptic level that is never Arjuna's. The Karṇa-Śalya colloquy is yet another variation that stands the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna model on its head. Karṇa's last speech to Śalya is a unique passage in the epic, conflating a multitude of emotions: insult, confession, boasting, abuse, threat, forgiveness, summing up "the strange imbalance between potence and irresolution that is so part of his make-up."

Karṇa's fidelity to his word and to liberality for winning fame–his preeminent concern–raise him to heroic levels that no other character reaches. Yet, Karṇa is far more mundane in his sufferings and conquests than Arjuna, who destroys hosts of Daityas whom the gods cannot defeat and duels with Śiva himself. Nor is Karṇa brutal and unfeeling, like Bhīma who does not even mourn Ghaṭatkaca and is quite demonic in his deeds. This humanity is what makes him more appealing as an epic hero and is the secret behind the numerous vernacular compositions celebrating him. Karṇa is defined by two

crucial relationships: with Duryodhana it is one of inseparable confidante and advisor, paralleling that of Kṛṣṇa with Arjuna; with Bhīṣma it is one of contention arising out of a curious similarity. The origin of both is linked to the heavens (Sūrya, Dyaus); both emerge out of the Gaṅgā; both are Paraśurāma's disciple; both are advisors of the Hastināpura court–Bhīṣma of the titular monarch and Karṇa of the actual ruler; both command the Kaurava army in turn and are regarded as the major hindrances to Pāṇḍava victory.

McGrath isolates six crucial ṣpeeches Karṇa makes to Sūrya, Indra, Kṛṣṇa, Kuntī, Kṛpa, and Śalya, concluding that his use of speech as a form of assault sets off the epic's movement towards the battlefield. Dhṛtarāṣṭra refers to Karṇa as one characterized by bitter speech, while Yudhiṣṭhira speaks of him as "one whose teeth are spears and arrows and whose tongue is a sword." McGrath identifies four levels in Karṇa's persona where loss increasingly overwhelms him. In the interactions with Indra and Kṛpa he lacks nothing. In the speech to Kṛṣṇa a sense of doom looms which he repeats when declaiming to Duryodhana on fate, for he is no longer invincible. Ultimately, shedding tears at his son's death, he is vulnerable like Achilles weeping over Patroklos and Rāvaṇa over Meghanāda. His own death soon follows, for the epic hero needs must succumb to mortality to be celebrated eternally.

McGrath makes a valuable point regarding the cult of the hero that is common to Occidental and Oriental myth when he notes the large number of hero-stones existing in Maharashtra, celebrating heroes killed while protecting cattle. He quotes Bhīṣma from the Śānti Parva stating that heroism is the supreme value in the three worlds, for all is based on the hero. Seeking for sculptural proof of this as in Greek society, he points us to two singular references in the Bhīṣma and Droṇa *parvans* to statues of Kuru kings housed in the temple trembling, laughing, dancing, and weeping and to the banners of Draupadī's sons exhibiting images of the Aśvins, Indra, Maruts, and Dharma. Karṇa's qualification as a hero is borne out by the fact that both enemies and friends sing laments for him. Further, like the Indo-European hero, Karṇa is the eternal solitary. Like the Senecan tragic hero, he can very well have as his motto, "I am myself, alone!"

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

Dedication

The Karṇa Parva is dedicated to the memory
of Shivaji Sawant
whose Marāṭhi fictional re-telling of Karṇa
Mrityunjaya: The Death-Conqueror
is a contemporary classic of Indian literature

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīṁ Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION ~

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

SECTION ONE

1 O rājā! (said Vaiśampāyana)
After Droṇa's death, the depressed kings
Led by Duryodhana,
Went to Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

2 Mourning the passing away of Droṇa,
Deeply dejected,
Bereft of energy and hope,
They gathered around the son of Śaradvat.

3 For some time
They consoled him
With words from the śāstras;
When night fell,
The lords of the earth
Returned to their royal tents.

4 But their minds were ill at ease
In their tents, O Kaurava.
The carnage of the war
Brought only grief and gloom.

5 Especially the charioteer's son Karṇa,
Rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana
And the mahā-powerful son of Subala, Śakuni –

6 They passed the night in Duryodhana's tent,
Thinking of the plight and pain
Through which
The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas had passed.

7 The dragging and demeaning
Of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
In the open sabhā
After the dice-game
Came back to them repeatedly,
Deeply distressing them.

8 O rājā! So depressed were they
Remembering the plight of the Pāṇḍavas
After the dice-game, that one night
Became one hundred years to them.

9 Dawn came gently.
Stricken by fate,
They faithfully followed
All the rituals
Of obsequy-purification.

10 The funeral rites over,
O Bharata,
They consoled each other
And ordered the soldiers
To get ready for battle,

11 Under the command
Of Karṇa, who had passed
Through the solemn
Kautuka-ceremony;
And they offered pūjā
To the excellent twice-born
Brahmins present
In the form of curds
Ghee
Sun-dried winnowed rice

12 Cows horses and gold coins
Vestures and wealth
And praises and victory-chants
And blessing by Magadha
And other professional bards.

13 O rājā!
The Pāṇḍavas performed
The early morning *Pūrvāhni*-ceremony
And emerged from their tents
Ready for battle.

14 Then resumed
The tumultuous horripilating battle
Between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
Both obsessed
With vanquishing each other.

15 O rājā!
Under the generalship of Karṇa,
The battle between
The Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas
Lasted two days.

16 Vṛṣa-Karṇa inflicted
A terrible carnage
On his enemies,
Until he was killed
By Phālguna-Arjuna
Before the very eyes
Of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

17 Sañjaya soon left for Hastināpura
(Also known as Nāgapura)
Where he informed Dhṛtarāṣṭra
Of the events
That had transpired
In Kurujāṅgala.

18 Whn the old rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(said Janamejaya),
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
Heard that Āpageya-Bhīṣma
And Droṇa had been killed,
He was deeply dejected.

19 O finest of the twice-born!
When, added to that,
He learnt from Duryodhana
That Karṇa too had been killed,
How could he have survived
Such sorrow?

20 How could that descendant
Of the Kauravas
Have survived after learning
That the one person
On whom he depended
For the victory of his sons –
That person had perished?

21 It must be that it's very difficult
For humans to give up life
Even in direst calamity –
Because even after hearing
Of the death of Karṇa,
King Dhṛtarāṣṭra clung to life.

22 O Brahmin!
Śāntanu's old son Bhīṣma
Bāhlīka
Droṇa
Somadatta
Bhūriśravas

23 Other friends too
Sons
Grandsons –
He heard of their deaths
And went on living –
Yes, O twice-born one,
If you ask me,
To give up living is very difficult.

24 O mahā-muni!
Tell me about all of them in detail.
I never tire listening
To the stories of my ancestors.

SECTION TWO

1 Mahārāja!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
When Karṇa was killed,
Gavalgaṇa's son Sañjaya
Hurried that very night
On wind-swift horses
To the Elephant-City Hastināpura.

2 He was deeply troubled.
Arriving in Hastināpura
He went straight to the palace
Of Dhṛtarāṣṭra – a palace
Now near empty of relatives and friends.

3 He stood before the bewildered,
Depleted-of-energy rājā,
Folded his palms in *añjali*
And bowed till his head
Touched the monarch's feet.

4 Offering this respectful pūjā
To the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
He murmured, "Hai! How painful!"
Then he said:

5 "Kṣiti-pati! Lord of the earth!
I am Sañjaya.
Are you well?
Or are you troubled
By the crises created
By your own misconduct?

6 You ignored the good advice
Of Vidura
Droṇa
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
And Keśava-Krishna.
Is it painful to recall
That advice now?

7 Is it painful now to recall how
You rejected the advice
Of Paraśurāma
Nārada
Kaṇva
And so many others in the sabhā?

8 Is it painful now to remember
They are all dead –
Bhīṣma and Droṇa
And other well-wishers –
All killed by your enemies?"

9 Sighing heavily and deeply,
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied
To the charioteer's son Sañjaya
Who stood there in *añjali*:

10 "Sañjaya!
My heart is paining
Because river-born
Āpageya-Bhīṣma is dead
And the divine-śāstra-knower
Heroic Droṇa is dead.

11 Bhīṣma was an incarnation
Of the eighth Vasu.
Each day on the battlefield
He killed ten thousand
Armour-clad mahā-chariot-heroes.

12 He was killed on the battlefield
By Śikhaṇḍin,
The son of Yajñasena,
Under the protection
Of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
That is why
My heart is paining.

13 Bhṛgu's son Mahātmā Paraśurāma
Instructed Drona in the use
Of the finest war-weapons.
Paraśurāma taught him
Brilliant bowcraft
From his earliest childhood.

14 Through the grace of Droṇa
The Pāṇḍava princes
Became mahā-chariot-heroes –
And not just they
But many others too –

15 And I hear now
That same Droṇa,
That truly dedicated bowman,
Has been killed in battle
By Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
That is why my heart is paining.

16 No one in the world equalled him
In the four-fold science
Of war-weapons:
The Free –
Those released by the hand
Like arrows;
The Unfree –
Those clutched by the hand
Like swords;
The Machine-free –
Those shot by machines
Like fire-balls;
The Free-and-Unfree –
Those which return after released
Like Indra's thunderbolt.
That same Droṇa
And Bhīṣma are dead, I hear.
That is why my heart is paining.

17 No one in the three worlds
Equalled him
In the use of war-weapons.
Tell me:
What did my sons do
When they heard Droṇa had died?

18 The mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍava Arjuna
Despatched all the Saṁśaptakas
To the realm of Yama.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Showed remarkable prowess.

19 When the Nārāyaṇa-missile
Of Droṇa's wise son Aśvatthāman
Was neutralised,
And the ranks of my army
Panicked and fled,
What did my sons do?

20 I have a fear
That the panic of the army
Was so complete
That the soldiers who fled
Were like shipwrecked sailors
Floundering in a sea of futility.

21 Duryodhana
Karṇa
The Bhoja-ruler Kṛtavarman
The Madra-rājā Śalya
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Kṛpa –

22 And the remaining
Sons of mine –
What happened to the glow
On their faces, O Sañjaya,
When my army panicked?

23 Son of Gavalgaṇa!
Tell me everything
In detail –
The valour of the Pāṇḍavas
And the valour of the soldiers
Of my army."

24 O lord of the earth!
(replied Sañjaya)
Do not let yourself suffer
For what happened
To the Kauravas
Because of your misconduct.
The wise refuse to suffer
At what fate brings.

25 What one least expects
To happen, can happen.
That's the lot of man.
The expected too can happen.
The wise do not worry over
What comes or does not come."

26 "Sañjaya,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"I am not overly troubled.
I know deep down
Fate is supreme.
Tell me whatever
You want to tell me."

SECTION THREE

1 The death of Droṇa
The brilliant bowman
(continued Sañjaya)
Depressed your mahā-
Chariot-hero sons.
Their faces turned pale.

2 O lord of the earth!
So shocked were the heavily.
Armed warriors they neither spoke
Nor looked at each other.

3 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing their faces
Change colour
Because of their grief,
Your perturbed soldiers
Looked up fearfully.

4 O Indra-among-rājās!
Seeing Droṇa killed in battle
Your soldiers were so unnerved
Their blood-smeared weapons
Slipped from their hands.

5 O descendant of Bhārata!
Mahārāja! Some weapons,
Dangling from their waists,
Shone like planets
In the sky.

6 Mahārāja!
Seeing your army standing
As if lifeless,
Rājā Duryodhana said:

7 "Depending literally
On the strength of your arms,
I challenged the Pāṇḍavas
And entered this war.

8 It seems however
That the death of Droṇa
Has dispirited you.
Soldiers die in battle –
Most soldiers die – all die –
That is what war is.

9 You go to war knowing
It's either victory –
Or death.
What's so remarkable about that?
Fight! Look around you –
And fight!

10 See the flesh-armour-sliced,
Mahā-ātmaned, brilliant bowman,
Celestial-weaponed, mahā-powerful
Karṇa lording the battlefield!

11 And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is afraid of him
And runs away from him –
He does, Kuntī's foolish son –
Like a deer from a lion.

12 Karṇa is the hero
Who made mahā-powerful
Bhīma who has the strength
Of ten thousand elephants
Get into the same predicament
As any ordinary human.

13 He is the one who
With his invincible śakti
Killed Ghaṭotkaca,
The fiercely-roaring
Māyā-wielding rākṣasa.

14 See that intelligent, truly
Dedicated hero on the field
Today, the difficult-to-defeat,
Unrelentingly energetic Karṇa.

15 See today
The prowess
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
And Rādhā's son Karṇa
Fighting the sons of Pāṇḍu
Whose prowess equals that
Of Viṣṇu and Vāsava-Indra.

16 Each of you singly
Has the śakti to face
And kill the Pāṇḍavas
And their entire army.
What can you not do
When you fight united?

17 You are valiant.
You are well-versed
In all war-weapons.
Show each other
Your manliness today!"
Saying this, appointing
Karṇa as general,

18 Your mahā-heroic son
Duryodhana and his brothers
Prepared for battle,
O defectless one.

19 O rājā!
Having become general,
The mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa roared
His leonine war-cry
And launched his attack
On the battlefield.

20 O respected monarch!
The victims of his carnage
Were the Kekayas, Videhas,
Sṛñjayas and Pāñcālas.

21 Hundreds upon hundreds
Of arrows streamed
In seamless lines
From his bow, like
Strings of bees.

22 Harassing and oppressing
The Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas,
Killing thousands of warriors,
He perished in the end
At the hands of Arjuna.

SECTION FOUR

1 Mahārāja!
(said Vaiśampāyana)
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
Heard this sorrowfully
For he feared the death
Of his son Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

2 He fell unconscious
On the ground like an elephant.
With the collapse
Of that excelling rājā
On the ground,

3 O excellent Bharata
Monarch Janamejaya,
A mahā-wail
Of weeping women was heard –
A wail which engulfed
The entire earth.

4 The ladies of the Bharata dynasty,
Sunk in a mahā-grievous
Sea of desolation,
Expressed their burning sorrow
In uncontrollable tears.

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
Gāndhārī and the other ladies
Approached the rājā
And collapsed in grief.

6 O rājā! Sañjaya calmed
The disconsolate royal ladies
Who in insensate grief
Kept weeping copiously.

7 Despite the solacing,
The royal ladies shivered
Like plantain trees
Swaying in a strong breeze.

8 Vidura sprinkled water
On the magnificent monarch
Who had wisdom-inseeing-eyes,
Trying to revive him.

9 Lord of the earth!
Your majesty!
O Indra-among-rājās!
Slowly recovering consciousness,
The king stared at the ladies
With a vacant look
For some time.

10 He was lost in thought
For a long time.
Then, sighing again and again,
He started blaming his sons
And praising the Pāṇḍavas.

11 Speaking poorly
Of his own intelligence
And the intelligence
Of Subala's son Śakuni,
He lapsed into thought again
For a long time;
Then he started trembling.

12 Somehow he regained control
Over himself.
Then the rājā asked
Gavalgaṇa's son Sañjaya
A series of questions:

13 "Sañjaya, I heard all
That you said. O charioteer's son,
Tell me this: Has Duryodhana
Gone to the realm of Yama?

14 Did my victory-obsessed son
Fail? O Sañjaya,
You have told me this once,
But tell it to me again."

15 O Janamejaya!
Asked by rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
The charioteer's son Sañjaya replied:
"O rājā! The mahā-chariot-hero,
Vaikartana-Karṇa,
And his sons, were killed,

16 Along with his brothers,
All brilliant bowmen,
All ready to give up their lives
On the battlefield.
Duḥśāsana was killed
By illustrious Bhīma,
Pāṇḍu's enraged son who drank
Duḥśāsana's blood."

SECTION FIVE

1 Mahārāja! (said Vaiśampāyana)
Hearing this, Ambikā's son
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, deeply distressed,
Said to the charioteer's son Sañjaya:

2 "*Tātā*! Dear one!
Hearing how the ill tactic
Of my young-in-years son
Led to the death
Of flesh-armour-pierced Karṇa,
I am horrified
To my very marrow.

3 Take me away from
This killing grief!
Clear this fear I have –
Tell me:
Who among the Kauravas
And the Sṛñjayas
Are still alive –
And who are dead?"

4 O rājā! (replied Sañjaya)
After killing ten crores
Of Pāṇḍava warriors
In ten days, Śāntanu's
Valiant son Bhīṣma was killed.

5 After killing
The entire army
Of the Pāñcālas,
The difficult-to-defeat
Golden-charioted
Mahā-bowman Droṇa
Was himself killed.

6 After killing half
Of the soldiers who survived
The carnage of Bhīṣma
And mahā-ātmaned Droṇa,
Vaikartana-Karṇa
Was killed.

7 Mahārāja!
After he had killed
Hundreds of soldiers
Of the kingdom of Anarta,
The mahā-powerful
Prince Viviṁśati
Was killed.

8 Remembering his vows
As a Kṣatriya,
Your heroic son Vikarṇa
Faced his enemies,
Weaponless
And chariot-less,

9 And was killed
By Bhīma who recalled
The many heinous wrongs
Done by Duryodhana
And recalled also
His own vow of revenge.

10 The two princes,
Both mahā-chariot-heroes,
Vinda and Anuvinda,
Princes of Avanti,
Performed superlative feats
Before they were sent
To the realm of Vaivasvata,
God of death.

11 The hero who ruled
The kingdom of Sindhu
And ten other territories,
But remained subject
To your sovereignty –

12 That mahā-valiant Jayadratha, O rājā,
Was killed by Arjuna;
With sharp arrows
After Arjuna had first
Wiped out eleven *akṣauhiṇīs*
Of soldiers.

13 Duryodhana's son Lakṣmaṇa,
Difficult-to-defeat in battle,
Always obedient
To the wishes of his father,
Amazingly energetic,
Was killed by
Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu.

14 The heroic son
Of Duḥśāsana,
Whose strength of arms
Made him look resplendent
On the battlefield,
Was despatched
To the realm of Yama
In an encounter
With Draupadī's son

15 The lord of the
Coastal-dwelling Kirātas,
The loved-and-loving *sakhā*
Of the rājā of the gods Indra –
Dharmātmā

16 Earth-lord Bhagadatta,
Faithful follower
Of Kṣatriya-dharma,
Was sent to Yama's realm
By Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
In a magnificent clash.

17 O rājā!
Mahā-illustrious Bhūriśravas
Of the Kauravas,
Who had surrendered
His weapons,
Who killed by Sātyaki
On the field of battle.

18 That most magnificent
Of Kṣatriyas,
Srutāyu of the kingdom of Ambaṣṭha
Was killed by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna.

19 Mahārāja!
Your hot-tempered son,
Always-battle-ready
Weapons-expert Duḥśāsana,
Was killed
By Bhīma.

20 O rājā!
Sudakṣiṇa,
Who had under him
Many thousands
Of wonderful elephants,
Was killed in battle
By Savyasācī-Arjuna.

21 After killing
Hundreds of enemies,
The ruler of Kosala
Was despatched
To the realm of Yama
By Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu
In a memorable encounter.

22 Who had fought
Mahā-chariot-hero Bhīma many times,
Whose sword and shield frightened
His enemies – that prince of Madra
Was killed by the heroic
Son of Subhadrā, Abhimanyu.

23 The equal of Karṇa
On the battlefield,
Firm-in-valour,
Swift-in-use-of-weapons,
Mahā-energetic Vṛṣasena

24 Was despatched
To the realm of Yama
By Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Who recalled the slaughter
Of his son Abhimanyu,
And his own vow of revenge,
As he displayed his prowess
On the battlefield.

25 O ruler of the earth!
Śrutāyu was always hostile
To the Pāṇḍavas.
Reminding him of his enmity,
Pārtha-Arjuna killed him.

26 O respected monarch!
Śalya's son Rukmaratha,
The puissant son
Of Sahadeva's maternal uncle,
Was killed by Sahadeva
On the battlefield.

27 Also killed in battle
Were the elderly
Rājā Bhagiratha
And Bṛhatkṣetra
Of the Kekayas,
Who displayed remarkable
Feats on the field.

28 O rājā!
The wise and
Mahā-powerful son
Of Bhagadatta
Was killed by Nakula
Who scoured the field
Like a hawk.

29 Your grandfather Bāhlīka,
A mahā-powerful
And illustrious personality,
And his Bāhlīka followers
Were killed by Bhīma.

30 O rājā!
The mahā-powerful son
Of Jarāsaṁdha,
Jayatsena of Magadha,
Was killed by
The mahā-ātmaned son
Of Subhadra, Abhimanyu.

31 O rājā!
Bhīma's mace killed your
Two sons Durmukha
And the mahā-chariot-hero Duḥsaha.

32 Performing daring feats,
Durmarṣaṇa and Durviṣha
And the mahā-chariot-hero Durjaya
Were sent to Vaivasvata-Yama's realm.

33 Also despatched
To the realm of Vaivasvata
The god of death
Were the two brothers
Kaliṅga and Vṛṣaka
Who displayed stupendous
Feats on the battlefield.

34 Your own minister,
The supremely heroic
Warrior Vṛṣavarman
Was despatched by Bhīma
To the realm of Yama.

35 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna-Savyasācī
Killed the mahā-powerful
Rājā Paurava whose strength
Was that of ten thousand elephants.

36 Mahārāja! Two thousand
Foe-annihilating Vasātis
And all the valiant Śūrasenas
Perished on the battlefield.

37 The foe-annihilating Abhīśāhas,
Clad in heavy armour,
And the aggressive chariot-
Heroes – the Śibis –
Were all killed, along with
The Kaliṅgas

38 And the others –
Those who grew up
In Gokula,
Who flamed in anger
On the battlefield,
Who never turned
Their backs on the field, –
They were killed by
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna.

39 Thousands of divisions
Of Saṁśaptaka warriors
Were despatched
To the realm of Vaivasvata
By Pārtha-Arjuna.

40 Mahāraja!
Your brothers-in-law,
The two rājās Vṛṣaka and Acala
Displayed brilliant feats
On the field of battle
But were killed
By Savyasācī-Arjuna.

41 Bhīma killed
The mighty-armed Rājā Śālva,
A mahā-bowman
Renowned for his fierce
Deeds in battle.

42 Mahārāja!
Oghavān and Bṛhant,
Who fought valiantly
For the sake of their friends,
Have both gone to
The realm of Vaivasvata.

43 Lord of the earth!
O rājā!
Bhima with his mace
Put on end to
The finest of chariot-heroes
Kṣemadhūrti.

44 O rājā!
The mahā-powerful
Mahā-bowman Jalasaṁdha
Who was responsible
For a mahā-massacre
Of enemy soldiers
Was killed by Sātyaki
On the battlefield.

45 With splendid valour
Ghaṭotkaca despatched
To the realm of Yama
The Indra-of-rākṣasas
Alambuṣa as he rode
In his rākṣasa-pulled chariot.

46 Rādhā's son
Sūta-putra Karṇa
And all his mahā-
Chariot-hero brothers
Along with all the Kekayas
Were killed by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna.

47 The Mālavas
The Madrakas
The Drāviḍas
Who are fierce warriors,
The Yaudheyas
The Lalitthas
The Kṣudrakas
The Uśīnaras

48 The Māvellakas and Tuṇḍikeras
The children of Sāvitrī
The Prācyas and Pratīcayas
The Udīcyas
The Dakṣiṇātyas

49 Foot-soldiers
Chariot divisions
Ten lakhs of horses
Huge elephants –
All these,
O respected monarch,
Were slaughtered by Arjuna.

50 War-flags
Weapons
Carried by warriors
Meticulous heroes
Noble-charactered
Well brought up
Clad in mail
Wearing beautiful ornaments

51 Doers of remarkable karma –
Were all, O rājā,
Killed by Pārtha-Arjuna.
Others too, powerful heroes,
Bent on mutual killing,

52 Thousands of rājās, O rājā,
Were despatched
To their deaths.
I have given you
All the details you wanted.

53 It was gruesome,
The carnage
When Karṇa and Arjuna clashed –
As when Vṛtra
Was killed by Mahā-Indra,
When Rāvaṇa
Was killed by Rāma;

54 When Naraka and Muru
Were killed
By Naraka's enemy Krishna;
When Kārtāvīrya
Was killed
By Paraśurāma of the Bhārgavas

55 After a fierce battle
In which
Difficult-to-defeat Kārtavīrya,
Stupefying the three worlds,
Was exterminated
Along with his friends
And relatives;

56 When the buffalo anti-god
Mahisa was killed by Skanda;
When Andhaka was killed
By Rudra – similarly
Was the difficult-to-defeat
Hero Karṇa killed by Arjuna
In the chariot-duel,

57 O rājā,
In which perished also
Karṇa's counsellors and friends.
The hopes for victory
Cherished by your sons –
The root of this war –

58 Have been obliterated
By the Pāṇḍavas,
O rājā!
Mahārāja!
All this was foretold
To you by your
Friends and well-wishers.

59 You chose not to listen.
Thinking only
Of how best
To achieve the welfare
Of your sons,
O raja,
You failed to foresee
The impending calamity.

60 What you see now
Are the fruits
Of the rancour
That you have nurtured
Against the Pāṇḍavas.

SECTION SIX

1 "*Tāta*! Dear Sañjaya!"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"You have given me
The names of the warriors
Killed by the Pāṇḍavas.
Name the Pāṇḍavas we killed."

2 All of Kuntibhoja's descendants.
Mahā-powerful, mahā-dedicated,
(replied Sañjaya)
With their relatives and counsellors.
Were killed by Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma.

3 Hundreds of Nārāyaṇas
And Balabhadras,
Heroic warriors who were
Deeply attached to the Pāṇḍavas,
Were killed by Bhīṣma.

4 In true-and-total dedication
Satyajit was as powerful
And heroic as diadem-decked
Kirīṭin-Arjuna; he was killed
By vowed-to-truth Bhīṣma.

5 The Pāñcālas, brilliant bowmen
And versed-in-all-war-weapons,
Clashed with Droṇa,
Who despatched them
To the realm of Vaivasvata.

6 The elderly kings Virāṭa and Drupada
Who fought for their friends
Were killed along with their sons
By Droṇa.

7 The hero who as a child
Resembled Savyasācī-Arjuna,
Keśava-Krishna and Balarāma
In near-invincibility,

8 Who was an acknowledged
Mahā-chariot-hero,
Had nearly routed his foes
When he was surrounded
By six excellent chariot-heroes

9 Who lacked the śakti
To fight the heinous-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna –
That hero was Abhimanyu.
Kṣatriya-dharma-following
Abhimanyu was unchorioted,

10 And helpless Subhadrā's son,
O mahāraja, was killed by
The sons of Duḥśāsana.
After slaughtering many foes,
With his huge army

11 The illustrious son
Of Ambaṣṭha
Was displaying his valour
Fighting for his friends.
He clashed with
Duryodhana's son Lakṣmaṇa

12 Who despatched him
To the realm of Vaivasvata
The god of death.
The brilliant bowman
And invincible-in-battle
Arms-expert Bṛhant

13 Was despatched
To the realm of Yama
By Duḥśāsana
In a magnificent
Display of valour
The two difficult-to-defeat-
In-battle rājās,
Maṇimān and Daṇḍadhāra,

14 Displaying their valour
For the sake of their friends,
Were killed by Droṇa.
The rājā of the Bhojas,
Mahā-chariot-hero

15 Aṁśumān, with his army,
Was despatched
With splendid prowess
To the realm of Yama
By Bharadvāja's son Droṇa.
O Bharata descendant!
Citrasena, ruler of
The sea-coast territories,
And his son

16 Were hurled
Into the realm of Yama
By Samudrasena.
Nīla, who ruled
Another sea-coast territory,
And heroic Vyāghra-datta

17 Were despatched
To the realm of Yama
By Aśvatthāman.
A mahā-massacre
Of enemies was done
By versatile-in-war Citrāyudha

18 In varied ways
Until he was killed
By Vikarṇa.
Protected by Kekaya warriors,
Equal-of-wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma

19 King Kekaya
Was killed by
His own brother
With unbelievable prowess.
The illustrious mace-
Expert Janamejaya
Of the hilly regions

20 Was killed, O mahārāja,
By your son Durmukha.
Two brothers,
Both lions-among-men,
Both named Rocaman,
Both shining like planets,

21 Were sent
To the celestial realm, O rājā,
By the arrows of Droṇa.
O lord of the earth!
Many other kings
Of remarkable prowess

22 Who faced your soldiers
Were despatched
To the realm of Vaivasvata.
Purujit and Kuntibhoja,
Maternal uncles
Of Savyasācī-Arjuna,

23 Were despatched
By the arrows of Droṇa
To the realms
That are obtained by heroes
Who die on the battlefield.
The Kāśī-rājā Abhibhū,
Surrounded by a multitude
Of Kāśī warriors,

24 Was released
From his body
By Vasudāna's son.
Wonderfully valiant Amitanjas
Yudhāmanyu
And Uttamaujas

25 Massacred hundreds
Before our troops killed them.
O Bharata!
The Pāñcāla warriors
Mitravarma and Kṣatradharma,

26 Both brilliant bowmen,
Were despatched
To the realm of Yama
By Droṇa.
The son of Śikhaṇḍin, Kṣatradeva,

27 O rājā of the Bharatas,
Was killed
By your grandson Lakṣmaṇa.
The mahā-chariot-heroes
Sucitra and Citravarman
Were father and son.

28 As they careened
On the battlefield,
Droṇa killed them.
Mahārāja!
Like the ocean swelling
On a full moon night
Was the glory of Bṛhadkṣema's son;

29 But his weapons
Were exhausted,
And his glory subsided,
And he found
The profound calm
Of the supreme goal.
Senabindu's eldest son
Was assiduously routing
His enemies

30 When the Indra-of-the-Kauravas Bāhlīka
Killed him, O maharaja.
The excellent chariot-hero
Of the Cedis, O mahārāja,

31 Was also despatched
To the realm of Vaivasvata
When his carnage ended.
Valiant Satyadhṛti
Indulged in systematic slaughter
For the sake

32 Of his Pāṇḍava allies
Before he was despatched
To the realm of Yama.
O most excelling Kaurava!
Senabindu also died
After showing his prowess
In destroying his enemies.

33 Śiśupāla's son,
The earth-lord Suketu
Exterminated many foes
Before he fell
At the hands of Droṇa.

34 Droṇa's arrows killed
Heroic Satyadhṛti,
Illustrious Madirāśva
And valiant Sūryadatta.

35 Mahārāja! After performing
Not-easy-to-do karma,
Illustrious Śreṇimān was sent
To the realm of Vaivasvata.

36 O rājā! The body of
The foe-exterminator
And supreme weapons-expert
Prince of Magadha
Who was killed by Bhīṣma
Is lying on the battlefield.

37 Rājā Virāṭa's sons –
Śaṅkha and the mahā-chariot-hero Uttara –
Have performed
Their mahā-karma
And gone to the realm
Of Vaivasvata
The god of death.

38 Vasudāna has finished
his mission of carnage,
And Bharadvāja's son
Droṇa with brilliant prowess
Has despatched him
To the realm of Yama.

39 With the strength
Of his powerful arms,
Aśvatthāman has despatched
The Pāṇdya-rājā
To the realm of Yama.

40 These and many other
Mahā-chariot-heroes of the Pāṇḍavas
Were killed by Droṇa
With splendid prowess.
I have told you all
You wanted to know.

SECTION SEVEN

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"With the deaths
Of my finest warriors,
I do not see how
My remaining soldiers will survive.

2 The two finest Kauravas –
Both brilliant bowmen –
Bhīṣma and Droṇa –
Have died for my sake.
So have I heard.
What reason is there for me
To live any more?

3 He had the strength
Of ten thousand elephants
In each arm.
Rādhā's son Karṇa did.
I am desolated by his death.

4 Sañjaya!
You have given details
Of all my heroes
Who perished.
Tell me about those
Who have survived
The battle.

5 Today you have given me
The names of those who have died.
It seems to me that
Even those who are living
Have now perhaps died."

6 O rājā!
(replied Sañjaya)
The hero who received
The four kinds of weapons –
Wondrous
Dazzling
Celestial
Bow-based –
As well as
Other kinds of weapons
From the hands of Droṇa,
The finest of the twice-born –

7 That mahā-chariot-hero
Whose hand
moves swiftly
Who excels
in arms-knowledge
Whose bow
is adamantine-hard
Whose fist
is firm
That valiant
son of Droṇa
Is ready to fight
for your sake.

8 The finest mahā-chariot-hero
Of the Sātvatas
The citizen of Ānarta
The Bhoja weapons-expert
Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman
Is ready on the battlefield
To fight for your sake.

9 Whom it is difficult
to unnerve in battle
Who is the first
and finest of your heroes
Who has forsaken
his sister's sons the Pāṇḍavas
Because he desires
to keep his promised word

10 Who promised
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira
He would subvert
Karṇa's valour and energy
Whose prowess
is difficult to vanquish
Who equals Śakra-Indra
in bravery –
That heroic Śalya
is ready on the field
Eager to battle
for your sake.

11 With a host of horses
Of excellent breeds –
Sindhu
Hill regions
River areas
Kamboja
Vanayu –
And his own army
The rājā of Gāndhāra
Is ready on the battlefield
To fight for your sake.

12 O rājā!
Śaradvata's son Gautama-Kṛpa
A mahā-muscled hero
Well-versed in versatile
war-weapons
Formidable bow in hand
Is ready on the battlefield
Eager to fight.

13 O excelling Kaurava hero!
The mahā-chariot-hero
Son of the Kekaya-rājā
Standing in his chariot
Yoked to splendid horses
With pennants fluttering
Is ready on the battlefield
To fight for your sake.

14 O Indra-among-men!
Your son
Purumitra
Finest of
Kuru-heroes
Riding a chariot
that dazzles
Like the sun
Like fire
Careens through the field
like the sun
In a cloudless sky.

15 Standing in
a golden chariot
Decorated with gold
from the Jāmbu river
Surrounded by a force
of huge elephants
Impressive like a lion
in their midst
Your son Duryodhana
is poised for battle.

16 Clad in armour
decorated with gold
Shining like
a resplendent lotus
The finest human
in a circle of rājās
Duryodhana dazzles
like a smokeless fire
Like the sun emerging
from a cluster of clouds.

17 Also on the field
are your two sons:
Suṣeṇa brandishing
sword and shield
Satyasena
the heroic warrior
Brimming
with joy and hope
Eager to fight
for your sake.

18 O Bhārata!
The modest
But swift-acting
and war-fierce
Eldest handsome son
of Jarāsaṁdha
Whose name
is Aḍṛḍha
And Citrāyudha
Śrutavarma and Jaya

19 As well as
Śala
Satyavrata
and Duḥśala –
All these
incomparable heroes
Are ready to battle
for your sake.
Another prince
immensely proud
A wizard
in gambling
Who routs enemies
in battle after battle

20 Is ready with chariots,
Horses, elephants, foot-soldiers
To fight for your sake.
Heroic Śrutāyu,
Dhṛtāyudha, Citrāṅgada and Citrasena

21 Proud
Skilled
True-vowed
Are ready
on the battlefield
To fight
for your sake.
The mahā-ātmaned
and true-vowed
Son of Karṇa
is eager to fight for you.

22 Two other sons
of Karṇa
Versed-in-weapons
and swift-fingered
Are ready
O Indra-among-men
To fight for you
with a large army
Not easily vanquishable.

23 O rājā!
Surrounded by
These remarkable warriors
And other allies of limitless prowess
The Kaurava rājā
Is ready at the head
Of a huge elephant force
Aiming at victory
Like Mahendra-Indra
At the head of the gods

24 "You have listed
Those still living,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"And the dead.
The facts are clear enough
I can now see
Which side will win."

25 Saying this
(said Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Realising how many fine warriors
Had perished, and most
Of his army wiped out,

26 Became confused and depressed.
His mind was in a whirl.
In that semi-conscious state
He said:
"Sañjaya! Stay with me a little.

27 *Tāta*! Dear one!
This news
Is mahā-displeasing.
My mind is confused.
My heart is grieving.
My limbs
Are limp
With sorrow."

28 Saying this,
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Lord of the earth,
Succumbed to his grief
And slumped down unconscions.

SECTION EIGHT

1 O finest of the twice-born!
(asked Janamejaya)
When he heard
Of the death of Karṇa
And the rout of his sons
What did the Indra-among-men say
After recovering his senses?

2 What mahā-agony –
To learn about the deaths of your sons!
I am asking you. Tell me:
What did he say?

3 (Vaiśampāyana replied:)
When he heard
Of Karṇa's death –
Incredible
Unthinkable
Unbelievable –
Something to stupefy
All the beings
Of this world –
As if Mount Meru
Had begun to slide –

4 As if the mahā-mind
Of the Bhṛgu hero Paraśurāma
Had become confused –
As if Indra,
Doer of awesome karma,
Had been routed
By his enemies –

5 As if
The mahā-resplendent sun
Had fallen from the sky
On the earth –
As if
The inexhaustible ocean
Had dried up –

6 As if
Earth
Sky
The directions
The waters
Were all
Suddenly
Obliterated –
As if
Ill-deed and good deed
No more produced fruits
Of ill-karma and good karma –

7 And thinking
Long and deep
On this matter
Of Karṇa's death,
Lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra thought:
The army is doomed.

8 *They will all die.*
All creatures will die,
All of them,
Like Karṇa.
He burnt
In the fire
Of his grief.

9 Mahārāja!
Heaving deep sighs
Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Son of Ambikā,
Murmured sadly: "Hai! Hai!"

10 "Sañjaya,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"The son of Adhiratha
Was a war-hero.
He was strong
Like a lion,
Like an elephant.
His neck was like that
Of a bull.
His eyes were a bull's.
He walked
With the gait of a bull.

11 He was called
'Vṛṣabha the Bull'
Because he showered
Bountiful charities.
He could face even Indra
With bull-like courage.
He was a young; he had
A thunderbolt-hard body.

12 No one could face
The twang of his bow
And the deluge
Of his arrows –
Chariots and men
And horses fled in fear
When he attacked.

13 Seeking the shelter
Of this mahā-muscled hero
And depending on him
To vanquish his enemies,
Duryodhana made enemies
Of the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas.

14 How could that incomparable
Chariot-hero Karṇa,
That lion-among-men,
Unassailable-by-foes,
Be killed in battle
By Pārtha-Arjuna?

15 Depending on the strength
Of his own arms,
So confident was he
That he thought nothing
Of Acyuta-Krishna
Or Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
And other Vṛṣṇis.

16 *On the field of battle*
I will kill them both –
The wielder of
The Śārṅga-bow Krishna
And the wielder
Of the Gāṇḍīva-bow Arjuna –
I will topple the invincible
Two from their celestial chariot.

17 That's what he promised
My greedy, foolish son
Duryodhana who kept hankering
For the kingdom
With miserable persistence.

18 He had conquered
Them all –
The Kāmbojas
Āvantyas
Kekayas
Gāndhāras
Madrakas
Matsyas
Trigartas
Taṅgaṇas
Śakas

19 Pāñcālas
Videhas
Kulindas
Kāśīs
Kosalas
Śuhmas
Aṅgas and Baṅgas
Niṣādas
Puṇḍras and Cīrakas

20 Vatsas
Kaliṅgas
Taralas
Aśmakas
Ṛṣikas
Śabaras
Prahūṇas
Saralas

21 The Mleccha chiefs
The fort-sentinels,
The forest-sentinels –
And after subduing them
Made them pay tribute.

22 With his sharp, *kaṅka*-
Feathered arrows, for the sake
Of Duryodhana,
Finest of chariot-heroes
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Exacted tribute from them.

23 Celestial-missile-expert
Illimitably energetic
Vaikartana-Karṇa
Also known as Vṛṣa
The Generous One
The protector of our army
Who was well-versed-
In-all-war-weapons –

24 How could he have
Been killed in battle
By his brave enemies
The Pāṇḍavas?
Mahendra-Indra
Is called Vṛṣa
Because he showers
Varṣā-rain;
Karṇa is called
Vṛṣa the generous one
Because he gives
Bountiful charities,

25 I have not heard of any third
In the three worlds
Honoured as Vṛṣa.
Best among horses
is Ucchaiḥśravas
Best among rājās
is Vaiśravaṇa Kubera
the god of wealth

26 Best among gods
is Mahendra-Indra
Best among men
is Karṇa
For he is one
who is not defeated
By the bravest
of earth-lords
Who possess
limitless strength.

27 He is the one
who conquered
The world
for Duryodhana's glory
He is the one
whom Jarāsaṁdha
The Magadha-rājā
conciliated and honoured

28 And who went on the harass
the world's Kṣatriyas
With the exception of
the Kauravas and Yādavas.
When I hear
of Karṇa's death
By Savyasācī-Arjuna
in the chariot-duel

29 I drown in grief's ocean
like a shipwrecked sailor.
Hearing of Vṛṣa-Karṇa's death
in the chariot-duel

30 I drown in grief's ocean
like a shipwrecked sailor.
O Sañjaya!
That I do not die
Despite the agony
Of this terrible loss

31 Only goes to prove
that my heart
Must be harder
than a thunderbolt –
It cannot be pierced
even by a thunderbolt.
Hearing of the deaths
Of relatives and friends

32 Who would want to live –
except myself?
O charioteer! O Sañjaya!
I will take poison,
swallow fire, fall from a hill!
This grief is too much."

SECTION NINE

1 In looks
In lineage
In renown
In tapasyā
In knowledge of śruti
(said Sañjaya)
Saints
Have said
You are the equal
Of Nahuṣa's son Yayāti.

2 O lord of the earth!
In learning
You are a mahā-ṛṣi.
You do all well
That needs
To be done well.
Talk refuge
In your ātman.
Do not give in to grief.

3 "It's all fate,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"That's what I think.
Shame on human effort!
It's futile.
Strong and tall
As a śāla tree
Was Karna,
Yet he died on the battlefield.

4 Wiping out
The army of Yudhiṣṭhira
And the chariot-heroes
Of the Pāñcālas,
The mahā-chariot-hero
Who scattered enemy warriors
In all the directions,

5 Who confounded the sons
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī in battle
Like thunderbolt-wielding
Indra routing the anti-gods –
He lies dead on the field
Like a storm-uprooted tree.

6 Where is the end
of the ocean?
Where is the end
of my grief?
I agonise
more and more.
I want to die.

7 I have heard
of Karṇa's death
And the victory
of Phālguna-Arjuna.
Sañjaya, I cannot believe
Karṇa is dead.

8 My heart is hard
like a thunderbolt.
Why does it not break
when it hears
lion-among-men Karṇa
is dead?

9 Fate must have decreed
long life for me.
I have heard the news
of Karṇa's death.
I grieve, I deeply grieve.
Why is it I am still alive?

10 Shame on me, Sañjaya!
Shame on my life!
Look at me!
Deprived of my friends,
Look at me!
Look at my condition!

11 I will pass my days
like a foolish man
living on the pity
of others.
In the past I received
respect and praise
from the inhabitants
of the three worlds.

12 But now, charioteer,
how will I live
as the target of blame
from my enemies?
The deaths of Bhīṣma, Droṇa
and mahā-ātmaned Karṇa

13 Have piled grief upon grief
upon my heart.
With Karṇa dead,
I do not see
anyone else who
will continue to live.

14 Karṇa, O Sañjaya,
was the mahā-hope
of my sons
to ferry them across.
That arrow-showering hero
is now now more.

15 Without that bull-brave hero,
what use is my life?
Pierced by arrows,
he must have toppled

16 From his chariot like
a thunder-river peak.
Blood-soaked,
he lies on the field.

17 Like an elephant crushed
by a musth elephant.
The terror of my sons,
the terror of the Pāṇḍavas,

18 The ideal of bowmen – Karṇa,
has been killed by Arjuna.
The inspirer of fearlessness
to friends,
The brilliant bowman
and incomparable hero
Has been shattered
like a mountain

19 Smashed by the thunderbolt
of Devendra-Indra.
Like the lame walking,
like the poor satisfied,

20 Like a drop of water
slaking thirst –
Is Duryodhana's dream
of victory.

21 You plan something –
Fate plans differently.
Aho!
Fate is all-powerful.
Kāla
cannot be questioned.

22 O charioteer!
Did my son Duḥśāsana
Like a low-ātmaned
Unmanly coward
Get killed as he fled
From the battlefield?
Did he do nothing noble
On the battlefield?

23 Did not that hero
Die
Like the other bull-brave
Kṣatriyas?
Yudhiṣṭhira always said:
'Stop fighting.'

24 That fool Duryodhana
Spurned
The excellent medicine.
When mahātmā Bhīṣma
Lay on the bed of arrows,

25 He asked for water,
And Partha-Arjuna
Pierced the earth.
Seeing the gushing fountain
Created by the son of Pāṇḍu,

26 Mahā-muscled Bhīṣma
Said to Duryodhana:
'*Tāta*! My child!
Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.
With peace will end all wars.
With the end of my life
Will come the end of war.

27 Be brothers
With the Pāṇḍavas
And rule and enjoy the earth
Together.'
But my son
Spurned the advice –
Which he must now
Be regretting.

28 The wisdom
Of Bhīṣma's foresight
We see before us today.
Sanjaya!
My ministers and sons
Are dead.

29 Because of that dice-game
I have become a wingless bird.
Sañjaya,
Like a bird that's trapped
And its wings cut off,

30 And then set free
By playful boys –
And the bird cannot fly
Because it has no wings –

31 I am that bird
Without wings.
I am old and weak.
All my wealth is gone,
I am without friends,
I am without relatives,
I am dispossessed,
I am surrounded by enemies –
Where can I escape?"

32 Grieving copiously
Like this
(Said Vaiśampāyana),
The sorrowing monarch Dhṛtarāṣṭra
Turned to Sañjaya
And said:

33 "Who conquered all
The Kambojas
Ambaṣṭhas
Kekayas
Gāndhāras
Videhas –

34 Who for the sake
Of the glory of Duryodhana
Subdued the entire earth –
That strong-armed hero
Karna has been killed
By the Pāṇḍavas.

35 Sanjaya! Tell me:
When diadem-decked
Kirīṭin-Arjuna killed Karṇa
The brilliant bowman,
What other heroes were
There on the battlefield?

36 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Was he all alone,
And the Pāṇḍavas
All together killed him –
For you did say earlier
That he had been killed.

37 Finest of arms-wielders
Bhīṣma was not fighting
When Śikhaṇḍin cut him down
With excellent arrows on the battlefied.

38 Droṇa had laid aside
His weapons and was deep
In yoga when Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Shot arrows at that brilliant bowman,

39 And lifting his sword
Killed him. Sañjaya,
Both of them were killed
By exceptional deceit.

40 I have heard
That Bhīṣma and Droṇa
Have been killed;
But even thunderbolt-wielding Indra
Would not have been able
To kill Bhīṣma and Droṇa

41 On the battlefield
By fair means.
Believe me,
This is the truth.
While Karṇa was shooting
His celestial missiles,

42 How could death dare to touch him,
For he was like Indra himself?
That celestial gold-
Decorated śakti that
Dazzled like lightning

43 Given to him
By Puraṁdara-Indra
In exchange for his flesh-ear-rings,
A sakti with the pwoer
Of exterminating enemies;
That celestial gold-
Ornamented arrow
Called the Snake-Mouth,

44 Anointed with sandal-paste,
Beautifully feathered,
Capable of destroying all enemies,
Always present in his quiver...
He who dared
To face
Not only
Bhīṣma and Droṇa
But all other
Mahā-chariot-heroes;

45 Who learnt from
Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
The secret of the
Fearsome Brāhma-missile;
Who, seeing Droṇa
And other warriors
Retreating from the arrows

46 Of the mahā-muscled
Son of Subhadra
Abhimanyu,
Sliced Abhimanyu's bow
With his sharp arrows;
Who tackled
The ten-thousand-
Elephant-strong,
Irresistible-
As-a-thunderbolt,
And-as-deadly
As-a-thunderbolt

47 Hero Bhīma,
And unchsirioted him
And mocked him;
Who defeated Sahadeva
With depressed-knot arrows,

48 And unchariοted him,
But in accord with dharma
Spared his life;
Who fought the thousand-
Māyā-making, hoping-for-victory.

49 Indra-of-rākṣasas
Ghatotkaca and killed him
With the śakti-missile
Given by Śakra-Indra;
Whom
In all these days
Even Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Out of fear
Dared not fight

50 In a chariot-duel –
How could such a hero
Get killed in battle?
'The Saṁśaptaka warriors
Who are always daring me
To fight them elsewhere –

51 I'll finish them off first,
And then I will kill
Vaikartana-Karṇa.'
Arjuna would say this
And leave alone Karṇa
The charioteer's son.

52 How then
Was Pārtha-Arjuna able
To kill the foe-vanqhishing hero Karṇa?
His chariot was not damaged,
His bow was not splintered –

53 So how were the enemies of Karṇa
Able to kill him?
As he kept discharging
His celestial śakti-missile
And shaking his mahā-bow,

54 And shooting his fierce arrows
And his various celestial weapons –
Who could possibly
Have succeeded in routing
That energetic Karṇa,
That lion-among-men
Who fought like a lion?

55 His bow-string
        must have snapped
His chariot
        got stuck in the earth
His weapons
        exhausted –
Or how could he get killed?

56 I can think
Of no other reason
For his death.
'I will not have
Others wash my feet
Until I have killed Phālguna-Arjuna.'

57 That was the grim vow
Made by mahā-ātmaned Karṇa.
Afraid of him,

58 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
That bull-brave hero,
Could not sleep peacefully
For all of thirteen years,
The period of his exile.
Depending
On the valour and prowess
Of that mahā-ātmaned hero,

59 My son
Violently dragged
The wife of the Pāṇḍavas
In the sabhā,
And in the presence
Of the witnessing Pāṇḍavas

60 And in the presence
Of the witnessing Kauravas,
Karṇa shouted
At the princess of Pāñcāla:
'Wife of slaves!'
Adding:
'Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
Your husbands are finished.
They are sesame seeds
Without kernels.

61 Lovely lady,
Find another husband!'
Who in the past
Could speak so offensively

62 In the open sabhā
Against Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
Fearlessly –
How could that son
Of a charioteer Karṇa
Perish at the hands of enemies?
'If glorious-in-war Bhīṣma
And difficult-to-defeat Droṇa

63 Refuse to kill Arjuna
Because they favour
Kuntī's son
Then, Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
I will kill them both.
Dispel that misgiving
From your mind.'

64 ‘What can the Gāṇḍīva bow
And two inexhaustible quivers
Do to me who attacks enemies
With sandalpaste-smeared invulnerability?’

65 The speaker of those words
Whose shoulders
Were firm and strong as a bull’s –
How could he have died
At Arjuna’s hands?
Who brushed aside
The wounds caused
By arrows shot
From the Gāṇḍīva,

66 And saying,
‘Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
You are now husbandless,’
Glanced meaningfully
At the sons
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
Who never for a moment
Feared the Pāṇḍavas
Or their sons or Janārdana-Krishna,

67 Such was his faith
In the strength
Of his arms –
Sañjaya! *Tāta*! Dear one!
Whom even the army
Of the gods
Led by Vasava-Indra
Cannot kill –

68 *Tāta*! Dear one!
How could he
Have been killed
By the Pāṇḍavas?
Touching his bow-string
And wearing his leather gloves –

69 When Adhiratha's son
Karṇa did that, none
Dared to face him.
It is possible for the earth
To lose the light
Of the moon and the sun,

70 But it is not possible
To kill in battle
The Indra-among-men Karṇa
Who never turns his back
To his foes.
Depending on Karṇa,
Seeing bull-shouldered Karṇa
And his brother Duḥśāsana,
Foolish

71 And wicked-minded Duryodhana
Rejected the advice
Of Vāsudeva-Krishna.
Seeing bull-shouldered Karṇa
Dead,

72 And Duḥśāsana also killed,
I am sure
My son now repents.
Hearing of Vaikartana-Karṇa's
Death in the chariot-duel
With Savyasācī-Arjuna.

73 And witnessing the victory
Of the Pāṇḍavas,
What did Duryodhana say?
Durmarṣaṇa and Vṛṣasena
Also perished in battle.
Seeing this,

74 And seeing the army routed
By the attacks of the
Mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas,
And the flight of our allies, all the rājās,

75 And witnessing also
Our chariot-heroes
Turning their backs,
My son must have plunged
In grief. So I think.
Incurably arrogant,
Ill-intentioned,
Unable to discipline his senses,

76 What did Duryodhana say
When he saw his army
Scattered and dispirited?
Despite the advice
Of his well-meaning friends,
He fanned his mahā-hatred
Of the Pāṇḍavas.

77 When most of his warriors
Were decimated in battle,
What did Duryodhana say?
Seeing his brother Duḥśāsana
Killed by Bhīma,

78 Who drank Duḥśāsana's blood
On the battlefield,
What did Duryodhana say?
With the rājā of Gāndhāra, Śakuni,
In the open sabhā
He declared:

79 'Karṇa
Will kill Arjuna
In battle.'
With Karṇa killed
By Arjuna,
What did he say?
After delightedly
Cheating the Pāṇḍavas
In the dice-game,

80 What did Subala's son Śakuni say
When he saw Karṇa killed?
The brilliant bowman,
The mahā-chariot-hero
Sātvata Kṛtavarman –

81 What did he say, seeing
Vaikartana-Karṇa killed?
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas
Seeking instruction

82 In the science
Of bowcraft Dhanur-veda,
Go to the son of Droṇa,
Intelligent Aśvatthāman.
Young
Handsome
Impressive
Mahā-renowned

83 Aśvatthāman –
What did he say, Sañjaya,
When Karṇa was killed?
Ācārya of Dhanurveda
And excelling chariot-hero,
The Gautama-descendant

84 Śāradvat –
What did he say
When Karṇa was killed?
The brilliant bowman,
Shining-in-battle
Madra-rājā Śalya,

85 Undisputed ruler of Madra,
Valiant hero,
Finest of chariot-heroes, –
What did he say
When Karṇa was killed,
He himself
Being Karṇa's charioteer?

86 Sañjaya!
All the earth's rājās
Who came to fight –
All those difficult-to-defeat-in-battle heroes –
What did they say
When Karṇa was killed?

87 When the bull-brave
Lion-among-chariot-heroes
Droṇa was killed,
Who, Sañjaya, were choser
To lead the surviving divisions?

88 And tell me, Sañjaya,
How did the Madra-rājā
Śalya, excelling chariot-hero,
Get entrusted with the task
Of becoming Karṇa's charioteer?

89 In the battle
Who protected
The right-hand wheels
Of the charioteer's son Karṇa?
Who protected the left,
Who the rear?

90 Which heroes never
Forsook him? Which fled?
You were all united –
How did the mahā-chariot-
Hero Karṇa die then?

91 How did the mahā-chariot-heroes
Reply to the Pāṇḍavas
Who showered arrows
Like clouds showering rain?

92 And tell me, Sañjaya,
What happened
To the celestial arrow
The Snake-Mouth –
The finest of arrows –
That it failed?

93 My army has lost
Its courage,
Its will to fight.
Its finest leaders
Are dead.
I do not think
The remaining soldiers
Will survive.

94 Nor do I wish to live
When I hear
That heroic Bhīṣma and Droṇa
Have given up their lives
For my sake.

95 I cannot bear it!
I cannot bear to hear
Again and again
That Karṇa
Whose arms had the strength
Of ten thousand elephants
Has been killed
By the Pāṇḍavas.

96 Sañjaya!
Tell me:
How did the Kauravas
Retaliate
After the death
Of the excelling hero
Droṇa.

97 Tell me in detail
How foe-destroying Karṇa
Fought the sons of Kuntī,
And how the peace of death
Came to him on the field."

SECTION TEN

1 O Bharata descendant!
(continued Sañjaya)
The day the brilliant bowman
Droṇa was killed,
The plans of Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāmaṇ,
The mahā-chariot-hero frustrated,

2 And, mahārāja, the oceanic
Kaurava army routed,
Pārtha-Arjuna and his brothers
Remained ready on the field.

3 O bull-brave. Bharata!
Your son Duryodhana
Saw them triumphant,
Saw his own ranks fleeing,
And did his valiant best
To stop the rout.

4 Confident of the valour
Of his arms, O Bharata,
He reorganised his soldiers
And battled for some time
With the Pāṇḍavas

5 Who were celebrating
The success of their plans;
Then, with the approach
Of evening-saṁdhyā,
He pulled back his troops.

6 Withdrawing the army
And retiring to his rent,
The Kauravas made plans
For their welfare.

7 They sat
On comfortable, luxuriously draped seats,
Like gods
Relaxing on radiant thrones.

8 Rājā Duryodhana
Addressed the brilliant bowmen
Pleasingly, reassuring them
With appropriate words:

9 "Kings!
All of you are gifted
With fine, discriminating minds.
Let us not waste time.
Tell me: What is best
For us to do now."

10 Hardly had the Indra-of-men
Spoken than those lions-among-men:
Sitting on their thrones,
Gestured their eagerness to fight.

11 Correctly interpreting
The body-language
Of all those prepared
To lay down their lives,
And looking at the face
Of rājā Duryodhana
Radiant like the rising sun,

12 The intelligent,
Skilled-in-speech
Son of ācārya Droṇa,
Aśvatthāman said:
"*Rāga*-zeal
Yoga-dedication
Dākṣya-skill
Naya -organisation
Are the ways to success.

13 So the pandits say.
But fate is supreme.
Our god-like, world-renowned
Mahā-chariot-heroes

14 Were all
Valiant
Dedicated
Skilful
Organised
Yet all were killed.
That is no reason
For us to lose hope
Of victory.

15 If whatever is done,
Is done
With good intentions
And good means,
Fate is influenced
To favour the doer.
We should appoint
The finest of men,
One who possesses all the guṇas,

16 That is Karṇa,
Our general.
O Bharata scion!
With Karṇa as our general,
We will exterminate
Our enemies.

17 For Karṇa
Is powerful
Brave
Weapons-expert
Difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
He is as irresistible
As Vaivasvata the god of death.
He will rout our enemies."

18 O rājā!
These words of the ācārya
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Made your son Duryodhana
Place high hopes in Karṇa.

19 Bhīṣma and Droṇa.
May be dead,
But Karṇa will defeat
The Pāṇḍavas
O Bharata!
With that hope in his heart
Duryodhana consoled himself.

20 He was delighted
By the pleasing words
Of Aśvatthāman –
Respectful words,
Well-meant words,
Auspicious words.

21 Steadying his mind,
Becoming more confident
Of the strength
Of his own prowess,
O mahārāja,
He said
To Rādhā's son Karṇa:

22 "Karṇa!
I know
how strong you are.
I know
you are my best friend.
O mahā-muscled one!
Listen to what
I have to say
for my own good.

23 Brave hero!
Listen to me –
And then do
what you think best.
You are wise,
you are my mainstay.

24 My two generals
Bhīṣma and Droṇa
are dead.
Be my general.
You are stronger than they.

25 They were old –
those two brilliant bowmen.
And they favoured
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Son of Rādhā!
I made them generals
because you
advised me to do so.

26 *Tāta*! Dear friend!
In the mahā-battle
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
for ten days
favoured the Pāṇḍavas
by not harming them.

27 That was the time
you laid aside your weapons.
Taking advantage of that,
Phalguna-Arjuna
using Śikhaṇḍin as a shield
killed Pitāmaha Bhīṣma.

28 O lion-among-men!
When the brilliant bowman
Bhīṣma was laid
on his bed-of-arrows,
on your advice
was Droṇa made general.

29 I know that he too
favoured Pārtha-Arjuna
who was his student.
The old teacher too
has been killed
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

30 O hero with the power
of invincibility!
After the deaths
of those two heroes
I do not see
any warrior here
Who can equal you
in military prowess.

31 Only you have the power
to defeat our foes.
Of this I have
not the least doubt.
The truth is:
You helped us before,
you will help us after,
you help us now.

32 The burden of battle
now lies on you.
You are the one
who deserves to be general
You should yourself
appoint yourself general.

33 Like Skanda heading the army of the gods
become the head of the armies
of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

34 Like Mahā-Indra
killing the anti-god Dānavas
kill all your enemies
on the battlefield.
When the mahā-chariot-hero
Pāṇḍavas see you,

35 They and the Pāñcālas
will flee
like the Dānava anti-gods
fleeing Viṣṇu.
O lion-among-men!
Lead our mahā-army!

36 Seeing you on the field,
the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas,
Sṛñjayas and their ministers
will panic and flee.

37 Like the self-burning sun
scattering darkness,
Scatter your enemies
and destroy them."

38 O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
Your son had every hope
That after the deaths
Of Bhīṣma and Droṇa
Karṇa would defeat
The Pāṇḍavas.

39 With that strong hope
In his heart,
He said to Karṇa:
"O charioteer's son!
Pārtha-Arjuna
Does not want to face you
On the battlefield."

40 Karṇa replied:
"Son of Gāndhārī!
I told you long ago
I will overpower
The Pāṇḍavas and their sons –
And Janārdana-Krishna too.

41 Mahārāja!
Rest assured:
I will be your general.
No question of that.
And take it that
The Pāṇḍavas have lost."

42 Mahārāja!
(continued Sañjaya)
Hearing this,
King Duryodhana
And the other rajas
Stood up,
Like the gods standing
Before Śatakratu-Indra
"Receiver of a Hundred Sacrifices",

43 Like the immortal gods
Before Skanda, paying respect.
Observing the rites
Relating to the appointment
Of a general,

44 Duryodhana, O rājā,
Headed the other rājās,
Confident now
That victory was going
To be theirs.
Sanctified water
In earthen
And golden jars,
Charged with mantras;

45 Vessels of ivory
And rhinoceros-horn
And bull-horn
Filled with water
And gems and pearls
And sacred fragrant herbs. . .

46 Karṇa sat on a seat
Made of *udumbara*-wood
Covered with silk; happily
He received the articles
As ordained by the śāstras

47 From Brahmins
Kṣatriyas
Vaisyas
And respectable Śūdras
Who performed
The rites of installation
Of mahā-ātmaned Karṇa
And chanted his praises.

48 O Indra-among-rājās!
Formal installation over,
The foe-exterminating
Son of Rādhā, Karṇa
Gifted gold coins
And cows and other wealth
To the twice-born who
Chanted benedictions on him.

49 Rādhā's son Karṇa shone
Like the sun, surrounded by
Sūta, Māgadha and Vandī chanters
And Veda-learned panegyrists.

50 From all sides
Rose the sounds
Of sacred-fire worship,
The sonorous chants
Of professional singers,
And the tumultuous
Victory-cries of heroes.
All the kings present
Shouted: "Victory to Karṇa!
Victory to Rādhā's son!"

51 The bards and Brahmins
Said to bull-brave Karṇa:
"May you be victorious
Over Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
And Govinda-Krishna
In the mahā-war!

[VIII:10:52-56]

52 Son of Rādhā! Kill
The Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas
Like the sun destroying darkness.
Bring victory to us!

53 Just as owls
Cannot look
At the flaming rays
Of the sun,
So the Pāṇḍavas
And Keśava-Krishna
Dare not face
The arrows
Shot by you.

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54 Just as the Dānava anti-gods
Cannot face Mahendra-Indra
In battle,
The sons
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī
And the army
Of the Pāñcālas
Dare not
Face you."

55 Installed general,
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Of invincible radiance
Dazzled in splendour
Like a second sun.

56 Inspired by Kāla
The Cosmic Time-Spirit
To appoint Karṇa
As general
Of his armies,
Your son Duryodhana
Considered himself
Eminently successful.

57 O rājā!
As general
Of the armies,
Foe-subduing Karṇa
Ordered his soldiers
To be battle-ready
At crack of dawn.

58 O Bharata descendant!
In the midst
Of your sons,
Karṇa dazzled
Like Skanda
Among the gods
In the battle
That was fought
Against the demonic Tārakā.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 "After Vaikartana-Karṇa
Became general,
And rājā Duryodhana spoke to him
With brotherly affection,"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked Sañjaya,

2 "And mahā-wise Karṇa ordered his soldiers
To be battle-ready at sunrise,
What happened? Tell me."

3 O bull-brave Bharata!
(replied Sañjaya)
Your sons understood
What Karṇa had planned,
And ordered their soldiers
To get ready
To the joyous blare
Of martial music.

4 Respected monarch!
Before night ended,
A huge uproar
Was heard in your ranks:
"Get ready! Get ready!"

5 Lord of the earth!
Huge decorated elephants
Ornamented chariots
Armour-clad warriors
And horses
Getting harnessed

6 Excited soldiers
Hurrying about
Shouting at each other –
The tumultuous cacophony
Seemed to reach
To the skies.

7 White-flagged
Crane-white horses
Gold-ornamented bow
War-flag symbol
    and elephant rope

8 A mace
Hundreds of quivers
Śataghni-fire-missiles
Rows of *kiṁkiṇī*-bells
Śakti-spears
Śūla-lances
Tomara-javelins –
    all of them
    in plentiful supply –

9 Many excellent bows –
Such was the sun-radiant chariot
Of the charioteer's son
Karṇa – a chariot
On which fluttered
A plethora of pennants.

10 O rājā!
Karṇa blew his conch
Fretted with gold filigree,
And twanged
His massive bow
Decorated with gold-work.

11 Seeing the brilliant bowman
Karṇa, the finest of chariot-heroes,
Seated in his chariot
Like the early morning sun
Scattering
The dense darkness,

12 None of the Kauravas,
O lion-among-men,
O respected monarch,
Thought the deaths
Of Bhīṣma and Droṇa
And other heroes
To be a great loss.

13 O respected monarch!
Proclaiming by the blare
Of his conch
To make haste
And get battle-ready,
Karṇa ordered the mahā-army
Out of its tents.

14 Mahā-bowman Karṇa,
The terror-of-his-foes,
Inspired by his desire
To defeat the Pāṇḍavas,
Organised his ranks in
The *makara*-crocodile formation.

15 O rājā!
Stationing himself
At the snout
Of the *makara*,
He placed brave Śakuni
And Ulūka, the mahā-chariot-hero,
At the eyes.

16 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Was placed
At the head,
Duryodhana's brothers
In the neck,
And rājā Duryodhana
With a massive army
In the middle.

17 O Indra-among-rājās!
At the left foot
Were the difficult-to-defeat
Gopāla units of the Nārāyaṇī
Army, headed by Kṛtavarman.

18 At the right foot,
O rājā,
Was Gotama's son Kṛpa
Reinforced by the mahā-bowmen
The Trigartas
And the Dakṣiṇātyas.

19 Śalya was positioned
In the left hind-foot
With a huge army
Of soldiers from
The kingdom of Madra.

20 Mahārāja!
Vowed-to-truth Suṣeṇa
Was at the right hind-foot
With three hundred elephants
And a thousand chariots.

21 The mahā-valiant brothers
Citra and Citrasena
With a massive army
Occupied the tail.

22 O Indra-among-rājās!
Seeing the strategy
Of the finest-of-men Karṇa,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Glanced at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
And said:

23 "Brave Pārtha-Arjuna!
Look at the way
Karṇa has organised
The battle-formation
Of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's army –
See how the mahā-chariot-
Heroes have been positioned
To protect the main force.

24 Mahā-muscled one!
The bravest warriors of
This mahā-army are dead.
Only the weak have survived.
In my opinion,
They are not worth a straw.

25 Only one matters –
The mahā-bowman,
The charioteer's son –
Karṇa. He shines!
Gods
Anti-gods
Gandharvas
Kinnaras
Mahā-*uraga*-serpents

26 All moving
And unmoving creatures
In the three worlds
Cannot defeat
This chariot-hero.
Mahā-muscled Phālguna-Arjuna!
If you succeed
In killing him,
Then victory is yours.

27 And the thorn
That has pierced
My heart
For twelve long years
Will be removed.
Mahā-muscled one!
Keep this in mind,
And arrange whatever
Battle-formation
You think fit."

28 On the suggestion
Of his eldest brother;
Śvetavāhana-Arjuna,
The white-horsed Pāṇḍava
Chose the Half-Moon Array
Against the enemy army.

29 Bhīma was stationed on
The left of the Half-Moon,
And the mahā-bowman
Dhṛṣṭadyumna on the right.

30 In the middle
Were rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
And Pāṇḍava Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Nakula and Sahadeva
Were positioned
At the back
Of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

31 The Pāñcāla heroes
Yudhāmanyu and Uttamaujas
Protected the wheels
Of Arjuna's chariot.
Watched over by Arjuna,
Not once in the war
Did they let down
Diadem-decked Arjuna.

32 O Bharata descendant!
The other heroic princes,
Clad in armour,
Positioned themselves in
Different parts of the Array.

33 O Bharata descendant!
Having implemented
The strategy
Of the mahā-formation,
The Pāṇḍavas
And your mahā-bowmen
Concentrated their minds
On the coming clash.

34 Seeing the battle-formation
Ordered
By the charioteer's son
Karṇa
Duryodhana and his brothers
Thought:
The Pāṇḍavas are finished.

35 O lord of men!
Yudhiṣṭhira also,
Seeing the Pāṇḍava formation,
Thought :
Karṇa and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons are finished.

36 Conches
Kettledrums
Tabors
Paṇava-cymbols
Dundubhi-drums
Dindima-small drums
Jharjhara-drums
Suddenly sounded
On every side.

37 O rājā! From both camps
Rose
A mahā-medley of sound:
Leonine war-cries
Of victory-wishing heroes.

38 O lord of men!
Horses neighing, elephants trumpeting,
Chariot-wheels clattering –
A fearsome cacophony!

39 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing Karṇa at the head
Of the battle-formation –
The mahā-bowman Karṇa –
No Kaurava
Considered Droṇa's death
To be a great loss.

40 Mahārāja!
Both the armies
Had soldiers excited
And eager to fight.
O rājā!
They bided their time
On the battlefield
To attack and kill.

41 O Indra-among-rājās!
Karṇa and the Pāṇḍavas
Drove through their ranks
Enthusing their soldiers
For the great battle.

42 The two armies
Faced each other
Manoeuvring
As if dancing.
Warriors on both sides,
Eager for battle,
Readied their ranks.

43 Mahārāja!
And so started
The clash of men
Elephants
Horses
Chariots
Bent on destroying each other.

SECTION TWELVE

1 Two huge armies
(continued Sañjaya)
Of excited men, horses
And elephants – resplendent
Like the armies of the gods
And anti-gods – clashed.

2 Men and chariots
And horses and elephants
Collided fiercely and violently
Destroying each other
And their ill deeds and misdeeds.

3 Lions-among-men
Sliced the heads
Of lions-among-men
Which littered the ground
Like so many suns
And full moons
And fragrant lotuses

4 The warriors severed heads
With half-moon arrows
Bhalla-arrows
Razor-arrows
Swords
Paṭṭiśa-axes
And *paraśva*-hatchets.

5 Long-and-strong-armed warriors
Sliced and toppled on the ground
The resplendent-with-weapons-and-armlets
Long and strong arms of other warriors.

6 They beautified the ground
The pink-palmed
And pink-fingered
Severed arms of warriors,
Like five-headed snakes
Dropped from the sky by Garuḍa.

7 Targeted by enemies,
Brave warriors tumbled
From elephants
From chariots
From horses
Like heaven-dwellers toppling
On the earth
From their vehicles
In the sky
After the merits
Of their good deeds
Have all been exhausted.

8 Struck down
By massive maces
Parigha-spiked clubs
And *musala*-clubs
Wielded by heroes
Of greater prowess than theirs,
Hundreds upon hundreds
Of warriors toppled on the ground.

9 In that dreadful clash
Chariots destroyed chariots
Musth elephants crushed
    musth elephants
And horse-riders killed
    horse-riders.

10 They sprawled dead –
Foot-soldiers crushed by chariots
Chariot-heroes crushed by elephants
Horse-riders killed by foot-soldiers
Foot-soldiers killed by horse-riders.

11 Elephants
And elephant-riders
Killed
Horse-riders and foot-soldiers;
Foot-soldiers killed
Chariot-riders
Horse-riders
And elephant-riders;
Horse-riders killed
Chariot-riders
Foot-soldiers
And elephant-riders;
Chariot-riders killed
Foot-soldiers
And elephant-riders.

12 What a mahā-carnage!
Foot-soldiers and house-riders
Elephant-riders and chariot-riders
With hands, hooves, weapons and chariots
Created a slaughter-horse.

13 Even as the mutual butchery began,
And brave heroes fell on both sides,
The sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
With wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma at their head,
Advanced against us.

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14 Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Śikhaṇḍin
Draupadī's sons
The Prabhadrakas
Sātyaki
Cekitāna
The Drāviḍa warriors

15 With a massive Pāṇḍya force
The Colas
The Keralas
Broad-chested and long-armed
And large-eyed and tall

16 Wearing a veriety
Of headgear and necklaces –
Their teeth red –
Strong as elephants –
In multi-coloured uniforms –
Their bodies anointed
With scented unguents –

17 Swords at their waists –
Nooses in their hands –
Endowed with skill and power
To defeat even elephants. . .
O rājā!
Sworn to death
They never forsook their comrades.

18 Peacock plumes on their heads
Bows in their hands
Long-haired
And sweet-speaking warriors.
Other foot-soldiers and horse-riders
Were also fierce warriors.

19 Other brave warriors
The Cedis
Pāñcālas
Kekayas
Karūṣas
Kāñci-dwellers
And Magadhas
Advanced swiftly against us.

20 Their charïot-divisions
Horse-riders
And elephant-ranks
Were excellent,
Their foot-soldiers fierce.
Laughing
And dancing
To the music
Of martial beats,
They advanced against us.

21 In the middle
Of that vast army,
Surrounded by warriors
Riding on the backs
Of elephants,
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
Led the attack.

22 That grand
Fearful elephant,
Gloriously caparisoned,
Dazzled like the peak
Of the Udayacala mountain
At sunrise.

23 His armour of iron
Studded with precious gems
Glittered like the sky
In autumn
Scintillating
With stars.

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24 *Tomara*-lance in hand
Handsome diadem on his head
Glittering ornaments on his body
Radiant like the high noon autumn sun
Bhīma began scorching his foes.

25 Seeing Bhīma's elephant
from a distance
Renowned Kṣemadhūrti
riding an elephant
Challenged
and attacked Bhīma.

26 The clash between those
Two gigantic elephants
Was as if two tree-covered
Mountains had collided.

27 The two heroes
on two elephants
Lunged at each other
with *tomara*-lances
Which shone like sunrays –
and they roared fiercely.

28 Retreating, they manoeuvred
with maṇḍala-movements
And leapt on the ground
nocked their bows
And started shooting arrows
at each other.

29 They roared
and slapped their arm-pits
They enthused
the soldiers
With the twang and whistle
of their bows
They screamed
their lion-cries.

30 The mahā-powerful
war-skilled heroes
Remounted
their beflagged elephants
Who with upraised trunks
resumed combat.

31 Like two huge rainclouds
pouring showers
The two heroes
with showers
Of spears and lances
sliced each other's bows.

32 Kṣemadhūrti plunged
a lance in Bhīma's chest.
Roaring, he thrust
six more lances.

33 Six-lance-pierced
rage-radiant Bhīma
Looked like the cloud-covered
seven-horsed sun.

34 With great accuracy Bhīma plunged
Into his enemy an iron lance
Sun-dazzling and straight-speeding.

35 Kṣemadhūrti
the rājā of Kulūta
Splintered Bhīma's lance
with ten arrows
And wounded Bhīma
with sixty more arrows.

36 Bhīma
the son of Pāṇḍu
Aimed his bow whose twang
was like roaring clouds
And afflicted
his enemy's elephant
With arrows –
roaring as he did so.

37 Harassed by the arrows
of Bhīma
The elephant panicked
and fled
And could not be stopped
despite all attempts –
Like a cloud
scattered by a storm.

38 Like a cloud
propelled by wind
Pursuing a storm-
dispersed cloud
Bhima's royal elephant
pursued Kṣemadhūrti's.

39 Illustrious Kṣemadhūrti
somehow succeeded
In restraining
his runaway elephant
And shot arrows
at Bhīma's elephant.

40 With razor-arrows Bhīma succeeded
In slicing the bow of his adversary
And wounding his elephant as well.

41 Infuriated Kṣemadhūrti
re-attacked Bhīma
And with *nārāca*-arrows
he pierced
The vital organs
of Bhīma's elephant.

42 O Bharata descendant!
Such was the attack
The mahā-elephant
of Bhīma
Collapsed on the ground
and perished.
Before he fell,
Bhīma leapt down.

43 He smashed his mace
on his foe's elephant.
Kṣemadhūrti leapt down
from the dead beast.

44 Wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
Killed Kṣemadhūrti
with his mace
When his enemy attacked
with upraised sword.
Still clutching
his sword
Kṣemadhūrti sprawled
beside his elephant,

45 O bull-brave Bharata,
like a thunder-struck
Lion beside a thunder-
riven mountain.
The Kulūta king killed,
your soldiers fled.

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 The mahā-bowman, heroic Karṇa
(continued Sañjaya)
Began slaughtering the Pāṇḍava warriors
With depressed-knot arrows.

2 O rājā!
The enraged mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas
Retaliated by decimating
Your son's army
In Karṇa's presence.

3 O rājā! Karṇa responded
By targeting the Pāṇḍavas
With hand-polished
Sunray-dazzling *nārāca*-arrows.

4 O Bharata descendant!
Mutilated
By the *nārāca*-arrows of Karṇa,
Herds of elephants,
Enfeebled and dazed,
Trumpeting fiercely,
Fled in the ten directions.

5 Respected monarch!
Seeing the charioteer's son Karṇa
Creating havoc in the ranks
In that mahā-battle,
Nakula swiftly attacked Karṇa.

6 Bhīma blocked fiercely aggressive
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
And Sātyaki kept in check
The two Kekaya princes
Vinda and Anuvinda.

7 Lord-of-the-earth
Citrasena blocked
The advance
Of Śrutakarman,
And Prativindhya
Blocked colourful-flagged
And magnificent-bowed Citra.

8 Duryodhana attacked
Dharma's son
Dharmaputra-Yudhiṣṭhira,
And infuriated
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Attacked the Saṁśaptakas.

9 In that hero-butchering war,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna attacked Kṛpa,
And defectless Śikhaṇḍin
Attacked Kṛtavarman.

10 Mahārāja! Śrutakirti attacked Śalya,
And Mādrī's son
Sahadeva the valiant one
Attacked Duḥśāsana, your son.

11 O Bharata descendant!
The two Kekaya princes
Vinda and Aruvinda
Showered Sātyaki
With shining arrows,
And Sātyaki retaliated
With a similar shower
On the Kekaya princes.

12 The two heroic brothers
Vinda and Anuvinda
Wounded Sātyaki in his chest,
Like two elephants in
A mahā-forest goring another
With twin tusks.

13 O rājā!
Though their coats-of-mail
Were severely damaged by arrows,
The two brothers
Wounded with their arrows
Satyakarma Sātyaki
The hero of true-karma.

14 Mahārāja! Descendant of Bharata!
Sātyaki only smiled
And with arrows
Shrouding all the directions
He pinned down the brothers.

15 Undeterred,
The two brothers,
Harassed by the arrows
Of Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
Shrouded his chariot
With volleys of arrows.

16 Splintering
The colourful bows
Of the two brothers,
The mahā-illustrious Sātyaki
Restricted their advance
With a shower of arrows.

17 With two other splendid bows
And mahā-arrows,
They shrouded Sātyaki
And continued traversing the field
Freely and swiftly.

18 Their *kaṅka*-and-peacock-
Feathered mahā-arrows,
Filigreed with gold,
Lit up the entire horizon.

19 O rājā! An arrow-darkness
Enveloped all
In that mahā-clash.
All three mahā-chariot-heroes
Had their bows splintered.

20 Mahārāja!
The difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
Enraged Sātvata
Hero Sātyaki
Picked up another bow
And, nocking it,

21 Sliced the head
Of Anuvinda
With a razor-arrow.
O rājā!
The ear-ringed mahā-head
Rolled
On the ground,

22 Like the head of Śambara
Killed in a mahā-battle
In the distant past.
It thudded on the field
To the alarm and grief
Of the Kekayas.

23 Seeing
His brother-killed,
The mahā-chariot-hero Vinda
Nocked another bow
And blocked the advance
Of Śini's grandson Śatyaki.

24 Afflicting Sātyaki
With sixty stone-sharpened
Gold-feathered arrows
He shouted:
"Wait! Don't move!"

25 The mahā-chariot-hero
Of the Kekayas, Vinda
Targeted Sātyaki's chest and arms
With thousands of arrows.

26 O rājā! His limbs pierced
With arrows, the truly illustrious
Blood-smeared Sātyaki looked like
A flowering flame-of-the-forest.

27 Wounded in battle
By the mahā-ātmaned
Kekaya hero Vinda,
Sātyaki smilingly
Retaliated with a volley
Of twenty-five arrows.

28 The two mahā-chariot-heroes
Sliced each other's bows
And killed
Each other's charioteers
And horses.

29 Deprived of their chariots,
Brandishing swords
And hundred-moon-embossed shields
They faced each other
For a sword-duel.

30 On the mahā-battlefield
They dazzled with their swords
Like Śakra-Indra and Jambha
In the ancient god-anti-god clash.

31 Weaving maṇḍala-patterns
On the battlefield
In that mahā-duel
They swiftly
Faced each other.

32 Skilfully and strenuously
They tried
To kill each other.
Sātyaki of the Sātvatas
Sliced the Kekaya's shield
In two pieces.

33 The earth-lord Vinda
Similarly sliced Sātyaki's shield in two.
Slicing the hundred-starred
Shield, the Kekaya Vinda

34 Performed maṇḍala-patterns
Of rretreat-and-advance.
Brandishing his sword and
Manoeuvring in that mahā-duel,

35 Śini's grandson Sātyaki
Cut down Vinda
With swift strokes.
O rājā!
Cut in two
In that mahā-duel,
The Kekaya Vinda,

36 The brilliant mahā-bowman
Toppled
On the field
Like a mountain
Hit by a thunderbolt.
The brave chariot-hero
Grandson of Śini;
Sātyaki the foe-vanquisher,
After killing Vinda,
Swiftly
Leapt into the chariot
Of Yudhāmanyu.

37 From that
Excellently equipped chariot,
Sātyaki began decimating
With his arrows
The mahā-army of the Kekayas.

38 Attacked mercilessly,
The mahā-ranks of the Kekayas
Fled from their foes
In the ten directions.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
Incensed Śrutakarman
Targeted the earth-lord Citrasena
With fifty arrows.

2 O rājā!
The ruler of Abhisāra,
Citrasena retaliated
By wounding Śrutakarman
With nine depressed-knot arrows
And his charioteer with five.

Transcreated by P. Lal

3 Enraged Śrutakarman
Struck Citrasena,
Who was standing
At the head of his army,
In his vital organs
With a *nārāca*-arrow.

4 Mahārāja! Pierced by
The mahā-ātmaned warrior's *nārāca*,
Citrasena reeled.
He lost consciousness.

5 In the meantime
Mahā-illustrious Śrutakirti
Shrouded earth-protector Citrasena
With another ninety arrows.

6 Mahā-chariot-hero Citrasena,
Recovering his senses,
Sliced Śrutakarman's bow
With a broad-headed
Bhalla-arrow,
And wounded him
With seven other arrows.

7 Picking up a bow
Endowed with the power
Of repulsing enemy ferocity,
A gold-filigreed bow,
Śrutakarman shot arrows
That made Citrasena
Look strangely disfigured.

8 In that mahā-battle,
With all those arrows
Sticking in him, rājā Citrasena,
Wearing varied garlands,
Looked like a porcupine.

9 Citrasena struck back
With a *nārāca*-arrow
That pierced Śrutakarman
In the chest.
Citrasena shouted:
"Wait! Stay where you are!"

10 Pierced by the *nārāca*,
Śrutakarman bled profusely,
Looking like a hill
Drenched with streams
Of dripping red chalk.

11 Heroic Śrutakarman
Streaming
With blood
From every limb
Glowed
On the battlefield
Like a flame-of-the-forest
In full bloom.

12 O rājā!
So infuriated
Was Śrutakarman
By the attack of Citrasena
That he sliced in two
Citrasena's foe-annihilating bow.

13 O rājā!
With three hundred
Lovely-winged *nārācas*
Śrutakarman wounded
Citrasena whose bow
Was already bifurcated.

14 With a fiercely sharp *bhalla*-arrow
Śrutakarman severed
The helmet-protected head
Of mahā-ātmaned Citrasena.

15 The radiant head
Of Citrasena
Fell on the field,
Like the moon
Willed by fate
Dropping from heaven
On the earth.

16 O respected monarch!
Seeing the rājā of Abhisāra,
Citrasena,
Killed,
His soldiers fled.

17 Infuriated Śrutakarman,
The mahā-bowman,
Hounded them with his arrows,
Like Preta-rāja god of death
Hounding the world's creatures
At Anta-Kāla World-End.

18 Attacked by your grandson,
The brilliant bowman Śrutakarman,
The soldiers fled helter-skelter
In all directions,
Like elephants trapped
In a forest-fire.

19 Seeing the soldiers fleeing,
Giving up all hope
Of defeating their enemies,
Śrutakarman chased them
And harassed them
With sharp arrows.
He looked resplendent.

20 Elsewhere on the field,
Prativindhya wounded Citra
With five swift arrows,
His charioteer with three,
And shattered the flagstaff with one.

21 With nine *kaṅka*-
And-peacock-feathered
Extremely sharp
Golden-winged
Bhalla-arrows,
Prativindhya was seriously
Wounded by Citra
In his chest and both arms.

22 O Bharata descendant!
Prativindhya retaliated
By slicing Citra's bow
With his arrows,
And wounding him
With five more arrows.

23 Mahārāja!
Citra hurled at your grandson
A flame-like
Śakti-weapon fitted
With tiny golden bells,
Irresistible, deadly.

24 Seeing that flaming
Mahā-meteor-like
Śakti-weapon speeding
Towards him,
Prativindhya laughed
And sliced it in two
On the battlefield.

25 Sliced in two
By the sharp arrows
Of Prativindhya,
That śakti plummeted
Like a thunderbolt
At the world-destroying
End of a yuga,
Terrifying all creatures.

26 Seeing the disintegration
Of his śakti,
Citra hurled a gold.
Filigreed mahā-mace
At Prativindhya.

27 The mace had earlier
Killed Prativindhya's horses
And charioteer
In the mahā-war;
Now, smashing his chariot
To smithereens,
It thudded on the ground.

28 O Bharata descendant!
Leaping down from
His shattered chariot,
Prativindhya hurled
A golden-handled
Elaborately ornamented
Śakti at Citra.

29 O rājā!
Mahā-ātmaned Citra
Caught hold of the śakti
And hurled it back
At Prativindhya.

30 That mahā-glorious śakti
Struck
Brave Prativindhya
On the battlefield,
Shot right through
His right arm
And plunged
Into the earth,
Illumining the spot
Where it fell
Like a flash
Of lightning.

31 O rājā!
Eager now
To finish off Citra,
Infuriated
Prativindhya
Hurled at him
A gold-ornamented
Tomara-lance.

32 That *tomara*-lance
Pierced the armour
Of Citra,
Penetrated his chest and heart,
And slid into the earth
Like a mahā-snake
Slipping into its hole.

33 Shredded
By the *tomara*-lance,
Rājā Citra
Toppled
On the ground
With his powerful *parigha*-
Club-thick arms spread out.

34 Seeing Citra dead,
Your war-wonderful warriors
Rushed fiercely
From all sides
Of the battlefield
To attack Prativindhya.

35 They shrouded him
With a variety of arrows
And *śataghni*-fire-missiles
Decorated with tinkling
Tiny *kiṁkiṇi*-bells,
Like clouds shrouding
The sun.

36 Like thunderbolt-wielding
Indra routing the army
Of the anti-gods,
Mahā-muscled Prativindhya
Neutralised those weapons
With his arrows
And scattered his foes.

37 King!
Assaulted by the Pāṇḍavas,
Your soldiers fled
Like clouds dispersed
By a storm.

38 With the rout
Of your entire army –
All the soldiers fleeing
In all the directions –
Only Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman
Dared to launch on attack
On mahā-powerful Bhīma.

39 A gory clash followed
Between the two –
Like the clash
Between Vṛtra
And Vāsava-Indra
In the war between
The gods and anti-gods.

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Displayed his versatility
In the use of war-weapons
By wounding Bhīma with a shaft.

2 Anatomy-expert
And swift-fingered Aśvatthāman
Targeted Bhīma's vital organs
With ninety arrows

3 O rājā!
Covered by the swarms
Of glittering arrows,
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
  Bhīma shone
On the battlefield
Like the multi-rayed sun.

4 The Pāṇḍava Bhīma
Retaliated
By shrouding Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
With a thousand
Accurately aimed arrows.

5 O rājā!
Neutralising the arrows of Bhīma
With his own arrows,
Droṇa's son smiled
And wounded Bhīma in the forehead
With a *nārāca*-arrow.

6 King!
Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma
Sported the arrow
On his forehead
Like the wild rhinoceros
Its horn.

7 Valiant Bhīma,
Seeking victory
On the field of battle
Smiled also
And struck the forehead
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
With three *nārāca*-arrows.

8 With the three arrows
Sticking in his forehead,
The Brahmin Aśvatthāman
Shone
With the glory
Of a rain-drenched
Three-peaked mountain

9 With hundreds of arrows
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Attacked Pāṇḍava Bhīma.
The wind
Cannot shake a mountain.
The arrows
Could not unnerve Bhīma.

10 Nor could hundreds of sharp arrows
Of exulting Pāṇḍava Bhīma
Upset Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
On the field of battle.
A deluge cannot move a mountain.

11 How magnificent
They looked –
The two maha-chariot-heroes,
The two fierce fighters
Stationed in their chariots
Shooting terrifying arrows
At each other.

12 Like two suns
With blazing rays
Working to consume
All the worlds
Of the universe –
Were the two heroes
With killing arrows
Working to destroy
The warriors
On the battlefield.

13 In that mahā-battle
The two heroes
Fearfully and revengefully
Made every effort
To destroy each other
With torrents of arrows.

14 Difficult-to-defeat, fearsome,
The two super-men lions
Manoeuvred, bows their jaws,
Arrows their teeth.

15 Like the sun
And the moon
In the sky
Invisible behind
A cloud-network,
They became invisible
In the arrow showers.

16 A few moments later
They reappeared
From behind the clouds,
The two foe-tormentors,
Like the two planets
Aṅgāra-Mars and Budha-Mercury.

17 In that horrendous clash
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman manoeuvred
So that wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
Was placed on his right.

18 Like a cloud pouring
Torrential rain
On a mountain,
He shrouded Bhīma
With hundreds of arrows;
But Bhīma was not awed
By this victory-tactic.

19 O rājā!
Pāṇḍava Bhīma reciprocated
With a variety
Of maṇḍala-manoeuvrer
That placed Aśvatthāman
On his right.

20 What a tumultuous clash then followed
Between those two lions-among-men
Each manoeuvring
In wonderful mandalas
To outwit the other.

21 They shot arrows
From bows stretched
Ear-taut;
They made every effort
To kill each other.

22 Each tried
To unchariot the other.
The mahā-chariot-hero Aśvatthāman,
Son of Droṇa,
Released numerous Mahā-weapons;

23 But they were all neutralised
On the field
By Pāṇḍava Bhīma.
Mahārāja!
What a horrendous
Weapons-war it was! –

24 Like the fearsome
Clash of planets
At the time of the annihilation
Of all creatures.
O Bharata descendant!
Targeted by the arrows
Of the two combatants,

25 Which lit up
All the directions,
The soldiers fled helter-skelter.
King!
Fearful was the arrow.
Shrouded sky,

26 Like the meteor-filled
Sky at world-end.
O Bharata-descendant!
The conflagration produced
By the colliding arrows

27 Scattered showers
Of scalding sparks
That consumed the ranks
Of both armies.
Mahārāja! *Prabhu*-lord!
The Siddhas,
Perfected mortals,
Hovering there, murmured:

28 "This battle
Is the battle
Of all battles.
No battle is even
One-sixteenth of this.

29 No battle
Will ever
Equal this.
Aho!
This Brahmin
And this Kṣatriya
Know everything.

30 Aho!
Their valour
Is awesome,
Their feats
Are dreadful.
Aho!
Fearful Bhīma
Is fearful powerful.
He is well-versed
In all war-weapons.

31 Aho!
The brilliance of their valour!
Aho!
Their suppleness!
They stand
On the field like two Yamas
At the end of Kāla!

32 Two fierce-looking
Lions-among-men,
Standing
On the field
Like two Rudra-Śivas,
Like two flaming suns,
Like two Yamas,
Two gods of death."

33 These words
Of the Siddhas
Were heard
Again and again;
Also the lion-shouts
Of the gods in the sky.

34 The wonderful
And unthinkable feats
Of the two heroes
Earned the astonishment
Of the Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

35 Gods
Siddhas
And the finest ṛṣis
Praised both,
Exclaiming
"Mahā-muscled
son of Droṇa!
Sādhu! Excellent!
Bhīma!
Sādhu! Excellent!

36 O rājā!
Bent on harming
Each other,
The two heroes
Glared at each other.

37 Anger made their eyes red
Anger made their lips quiver
Anger made them
grind their teeth
and bite their lips.

38 Like two clouds
Resplendent with lightning
Flashing in bow-shaped
Fury,
The two mahā-chariot-heroes
Shrouded each other
On the battlefield
With arrow-showers.

39 Mutilating
War-flags
Charioteers
Horses
In that mahā-battle.
They attacked each other
Mercilessly.

40 Mahārāja!
Eager to kill each other
In that mahā-clash,
They angrily shot two arrows
At each other.

41 Mahārāja!
Those dazzling arrows
Those thunderbolt arrows
Those invincible arrows
Sped swiftly
And struck both heroes
Each at the head
Of his army.

42 Impacted by the arrows
Speeding
Each at perfect velocity,
The two mahā-heroes
Collapsed
In the boxes
Of their chariots.

43 O rājā! Seeing
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Unconscious, his charioteer
Drove him away from the field
In the presence of the soldiers.

44 O rājā!
The charioteer of Bhīma,
Seeing Pāṇḍu's son
Intermittently
Fainting and recovering,
Drove the foe-crushing hero
To a place of safety
In another part of the field.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 "Tell me," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"How Arjuna fought
The Saṁśaptakas,
And how the other rulers
Fought the Pāṇḍavas.

2 Also, Sañjaya, how Arjuna
Fought Aśvatthāman,
And all the other rulers
Fought the Pāṇḍavas."

3 O rājā!
(replied Sañjaya)
Listen to me
As I describe to you
The battle that destroyed
The bodies
The misdeeds
The life-breaths
Of heroes
And their enemies.

4 Foe-destroying Pārtha-Arjuna
Entered the oceanic army
Of the Saṁśaptakas
And agitated
Its warriors
Like a maha-storm
Agitating
An ocean.

5 With sharp *bhalla*-arrows
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Severed the lovely-eyed,
Lovely-eyebrowed,
And lovely-toothed heads of
Brave warriors
With radiant full-moon faces
Which then lay littered on the field

6 Like lotuses snapped
From their stalks.
Round and long and strong
And sandalpaste-smeared
And aloe-scented

7 Excellently weaponed
Leather-glove-protected
With fingers like
Five-headed snakes –
These arms of his foes
Were sliced by Arjuna
With his sharp arrows.

8 Again and again
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
With his *bhalla*-arrows
Slaughtered and destroyed
Chariot steeds
Charioteers
War-flags
Bows
Arrows
And lopped off
Gem-ornamented arms.

9 O rājā!
With thousands
And thousands
Of arrows
Arjuna despatched
Chariots and elephants
And horses and their riders
To the realm of Yama
God of death.

10 The infuriated warriors,
Roaring and snorting
Like bulls maddened
For coupling with cows
In their season

11 Who rush upon each other
With attacking horns,
Fired arrows on Arjuna
Who was advancing against them.
A horripilating clash
That was –

12 Like the clash
Between thunderbolt-wielding Indra
And the Daityas
For the conquest of the three worlds.
Neutralising the weapons
Of his foes
Streaming from all sides
With his own weapons, Arjuna

13 Wounded them
With innumerable volleys
Of arrows
And finally
Killed them all.
Shattering
The three-flagged
Triveṇu-sections
Of chariots,
Their wheels
And axles,
Slaughtering warriors
And horses and charioteers,

14 Disintegrating, weapons
And quivers,
Shredding war-flags,
Slicing yokes and reins,
Smashing *varūtha*-fenders
And *kūbara*-poles
Of chariots,

15 Breaking the undersides
And joints and boxes
And *pramaṇḍala*-wheels
Of chariots . . .
Like a wind
Scattering mahā-clouds,

16 Victory-worker Jaya-Arjuna
Singly demonstrated feats
Of foe-frightening power
That could be performed
Only by thousands
Of mahā-chariot-heroes
Collectively.

17 The *saṁghas* of Siddhas
And deva-ṛṣis and Cāraṇas
Sang Arjuna's praises.
Celestial *dundubhi*-drums
Sounded, and flowers
Rained from the sky

18 On the heads of Arjuna
And Keśava-Krishna.
A bodiless Voice proclaimed:
"The radiance
    of the moon
The dazzle
    of fire
The velocity
    of wind
The splendour
    of the sun –

19 These always
    are the signs
Of heroic Arjuna
    and Keśava-Krishna.
Seated in one chariot
    they are as invincible
As Brahmā himself
    and Iśāna-Śiva.

20 They are the finest
of all beings,
These two heroes
are Nara-Nārāyaṇa."
O Bharata descendant!
Hearing these mahā-marvellous words,
And witnessing the mahā-marvellous happenings,

21 Aśvatthāman resolved
To attack the twin-Krishnas –
Krishna-and-Arjuna.
Challenging Pāṇḍu's son
Arjuna the foe-tormentor
Who was showering arrows,

22 Aśvatthāman, smiling,
Holding an arrow,
Said:
"Hero!
Treat me like
A venerable guest.

23 And grant me the respect
Of your martial hospitality
With all your ātman."
Invited in this manner
By the eager-for-battle
Ācārya's son Aśvatthāman,

24 Arjuna accepted it
As a compliment
To his prowess,
And said to Janārdana-Krishna:
"I have decided
To kill the Saṁśaptakas today.
And here is
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Challenging me
To fight him.

25 “Tell me,
Mādhava-Krishna,
What do I do?
Do you think
I should get up
And give priority
To the hospitality
Demanded by Aśvatthāman?”

26 Krishna heard Arjuna,
And drove
The son of Pṛthā-Kuntī
To a spot
Near Droṇa’s son Aśvatthāman,
Like Vāyu the wind-god
Taking Indra
To the yajña
As prescribed
In traditional ritual.

27 To Droṇa’s son Aśvatthāman
Who had firmly resolved
To do battle,
Kesava-Krishna said:
“Aśvatthāman!
Fight bravely.
Endure bravely.

28 Now is the time
To show gratitude
By repaying the master
Whose food one has eaten
To keep one’s body
And soul together.
Twice-born Brahmins
Battle over subtle points of detail;
Kṣatriyas battle
For victory or defeat.

29 You have this
Obsessive desire
To receive
From the hands
Of Pārtha-Arjuna
The sacred rites of hospitality.
Be calm today,
And fight Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
If you must."

30 The finest of the twice-born
Aśvatthāman
Heard the words
Of Vāsudeva-Krishna
And said: "So be it."
He targeted Keśava-Krishna
With sixty *nārāca*-arrows
And Arjuna with three.

31 In flaming anger
Arjuna splintered
Aśvatthāman's bow
With three arrows,
But Droṇa's son
Replaced the broken bow
With one even deadlier.

32 Pulling his bow tant
In the blink of an eye,
Aśvatthāman contained
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
With three hundred
And a thousand arrows each.

33 Methodically immobilising
Arjuna on the field,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Showered thousands of arrows –
Hundreds of thousands! –
Crores!

34 Respected monarch!
Quiver
Bow
Bowstring
Arms
Hands
Chest
Mouth
Nose
Eyes

35 Ears
Head
Limbs
Hair
Armour
Chariot
War-flags –
From all these places
Of wise-in-the-Vedas Aśvatthāman
Arrows streamed ceaselessly

36 Targeting Mādhava-Krishna
And Pāṇḍava Arjuna
With that mahā-net of arrows,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Bursting with delight
Let loose a deafening roar
Like mahā-clouds rumbling.

37 Mahārāja!
Speeding from the bow
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Those arrows shrouded
The chariot of Krishna
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

38 With hundreds of arrows
Bhāradvāja's son, illustrious Aśvatthāman
Made Mādhava-Krishna
And Pāṇḍava Arjuna helpless.

39 Seeing the two protectors
Of the moving and unmoving life
Of the world immobilised
By Aśvatthāman's arrows,
The creatures exclaimed,
"Hai! Hai!"

40 Hosts of Siddhas
And Cāraṇas arrived
From all sides and exclaimed:
"May today be
An auspicious day
For the worlds."

41 O rājā!
Never in the past
Had I witnessed Aśvatthāman
Perform such feats as he did
When attacking the two Krishnas –
Krishna-and-Arjuna.

42 O rājā!
The twang of the bow
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Was enough to frighten
The finest chariot heroes.
I heard it repeatedly
Like a lion, growling.

43 As it shot arrows
Right and left,
The bowstring of Aśvatthāman
Dazzled like flashes of lightning.

44 So bemused and dazed
Was Pāṇḍava Arjuna
By the speed and strength
Of the shooting
That he could only
Stand still and watch.

45 It seemed to him
As if he had lost
His skill and valour
To Aśvatthāman.
O rājā!
Difficult even to watch
On the battlefield

46 Were the incredible feats
Performed by Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Who looked like
Pinākin-Śiva the Trident-Wielder.
O lord of the earth!
Aśvatthāman's glory grew

47 And Kaunteya-Arjuna's
Declined – which enraged Krishna.
O rājā!
Breathing heavily, as if
To burn him with his eyes,

48 He gazed wrathfully
At Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman;
And again and again
He looked in the direction
Of Phālguna-Arjuna.
Then, infuriated Krishna
Said gently to Pārtha-Arjuna:

49 "Pārtha-Arjuna!
I see in you
This unbelievable change.
O Bharata descendant!
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Is getting the better of you!

50 Are you still holding
The Gāṇḍīva bow?
Or has your grip gone limp?
What has happened
To the valour and strength
Of your two arms?

51 All I see
On the battlefield
Is Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Reducing you to nothing.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Don't favour him
Saying, 'He is the son of my guru.'
Pārtha-Arjuna!
This is no time
For sentimental feelings."

53 Hearing
The war-cries
Of Aśvatthāman,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna said to Acyuta-Krishna:
"Mādhava-Krishna!
See how my guru's son
Is insulting me!

54 He thinks
He will kill us
By encircling us
With his arrows.
With my skill
And my strength
I will destroy his desire."

55 Saying this,
Finest-of-Bharatas Arjuna sliced
All the arrows
Of Aśvatthāman
Into three pieces each,
Like wind scattering mist.

56 Once again, Pāṇḍava Arjuna
Targeted the horses,
Charioteers, chariots, elephants,
Foot-soldiers and war-flags
Of the Saṁśaptakas.

57 Whoever was there
On the battlefield,
In whatever position,
In whatever capacity,
Realised that he was a target
Of the arrow-shower.

58 The different varieties
Of arrows shot
From the Gāṇḍīva-bow
Killed elephants and soldiers
Beyond even a two-mile *krośa*-distance.

59 Sliced by *bhalla*-arrows,
Elephant-trunks
Streaming rutting juice
Toppled on the ground,
Like giant trees,
Chopped by axes,
Thudding in a forest.

60 And the trunk-less
Elephants, with their riders,
Toppled too, like mountain
After mountain
Toppling,
Shattered by the thunderbolt of Indra.

61 Chariots
Constructed by Gandharva-
City artisans, well-furnished,
Pulled by intelligent horses,
Carrying heroes
Difficult-to-defeat-in-battle,

62 Were disintegrated
By Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
Who also rained volleys of arrows
On glitteringly decked
Horsemen and foot-soldiers.

63 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
The sun
At the end
Of a yuga –
    The Saṁśaptakas
    The mahā-ocean –
With his sharp arrows
That sped like sunrays
    Arjuna dried up
    The undryable ocean.

64 Like thunderbolt-
Wielding Indra
    Shattering
    A mountain
Arjuna
With thunderbolt-*nārāca*-arrows
    That sped
    With mahā-velocity
Pierced the maha-mountain
Son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman.

65 The infuriated son
Of ācārya Droṇa
    Aśvatthāman,
Eager to fight
Pārtha-Arjuna
    And his charioteer Krishna
Stood before them
Arrows at the ready –
    But Arjuna neutralised
    Each single arrow.

66 Like a host
Serving his guest
    All he has in his home
Angry Pāṇḍava Arjuna
Released all his weapons
    At Aśvatthāman.

67 Leaving the Saṁśaptakas, Pāṇḍava
Arjuna drove to Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Like a donor abandoning one unworthy
And going to a deserving recipient.

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 In the sky
(continued Sañjaya)
In the constellation of planets
The battle between
Śukra-Venus
And Angiras-Jupiter;
On earth
The battle between
Śukra-Aśvatthāman
And Aṅgiras-Arjuna.

2 Like two planets
Spinning
Erratic and awry
Spelling disaster for the worlds,
The two heroes
Agitated the battleground
With their resplendent
Flame-like arrows.

3 Arjuna gored
Aśvatthāman
Between the eyebrows
With a *nārāca*-arrow.
With the radiant arrow
Sticking on his forehead,
Droṇa's son looked
Like the rising sun
With its rays shooting upward.

4 Aśvatthāman
Retaliated
With hundreds of arrows
Aimed at
The twin-Krishnas –
Krishna-and-Arjuna.
They looked like
Two blazing suns
Radiating incardescence
At the end
Of a yuga.

5 Seeing Vāsudeva-Krishna
Wounded,
Arjuna fired a weapon
Sharp on all sides.
With hundreds of arrows
Thunderbolt-hard
Fire-radiant
Deadly as Vaivasvata-Yama's
    rod of death
He attacked
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

6 Illimitably powerful
Aśvatthāman –
A hero of horrendous karma –
With swift-speeding arrows
Struck the vital organs
Of Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna.
Death itself
Would agonise
If struck by those arrows.

7 With twice as many
Lovely-feathered arrows
As those shot by
The indomitable son
Of Drona, Aśvatthāman
Arjuna blocked his foe's arrows.
Shrouding the horses,
Charioteer and war-flag
Of that single hero,
He turned his attention
To the Saṁśaptakas.

8 Bows
Arrows
Quivers
Bowstrings
Hands
Arms
Hand-held
    Weapons
    Umbrellas
    Horses
    Chariots
    Chariot-shafts
    Uniforms
    Garlands
    Ornaments

9 Shields
Beautiful coats-of-mail
All kinds
    of pretty objects
Heads
    of enemies –
All were cut down
By the accurate arrows
Of Pārtha-Arjuna
Targeting heroes
Who never turned their backs
In the battlefield.

10 They stood there,
All battle-ready,
Excellently decorated
Chariots
Horses
Elephants
Complete with riders
But all were cut down
By hundreds of arrows
Shot by Pārtha-Arjuna.

11 Sliced by *bhalla-*
Half-moon-
And razor-arrows,
They fell –
The heads of countless warriors
With sun-, moon-, lotus-faces,
Diadem-decked and flower-garlanded.

12 Then came the assault
By the Kaliṅgas
Baṅgas
Aṅgas
Niṣādas
Bent on killing Arjuna
Riding huge elephants
    resembling Indra's elephant
Determined to destroy
    the Pāṇḍava
Who had humbled the pride
    of the foes of the gods.

13 Pārtha-Arjuna smashed
The elephants armours,
Shields, trunks, riders,
War-flags and pennants –
And they toppled on the ground
Like the peaks of mountains
Split by thunderbolts.

14 Like the wind
Driving mahā-cloud-networks
To obscure the newly risen sun,
Diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
After annihilating
The elephant army,
Shrouded his guru's son
Aśvatthāman with arrows
The colour of the rising sun.

15 With sharp arrows Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Repulsed the arrows of Arjuna
And shrouded Arjuna
And Vāsudeva-Krishna;
Then, like a massive cloud
Obscuring sun and moon
At end of summer,
He roared his war-cry.

16 Despite that arrow-attack,
Arjuna pressed forward
And dispersed the darkness
Created by the enemy-shafts;
And with lovely-feathered arrows
He wounded Aśvatthāman
And the soldiers of all your armies.

17 Impossible to tell
When ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
Selected an arrow
from its quiver
When he nocked it
And when fired it –
Only that his arrows
In a seamless stream
Ceaselessly slaughtered
Chariot-heroes and horses
Elephants and foot-soldiers.

18 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
With extreme swiftness
Nocked ten *nārāca*-arrows
And released them –
So it seemed –
Simultaneously.
Five lovely-feathered ones
Wounded Arjuna,
And the other five
Wounded Acyuta-Krishna.

19 Blood streamed profusely
From the bodies
Of those finest-among-men,
Arjuna resembling
The god-of-wealth Dhanada-Kubera,
Krishna resembling Indra.
Such was knowledge-fulfilled
Aśvatthāman's attack,
All on the field thought:
The two have perished.

20 The Dāśārha chief Krishna
Said to Arjuna:
"Why are you so confused?
Kill this warrior!
If you spare him now,
He will do worse –
Like a neglected disease
That leads to fatality."

21 "So be it!"
Saying this to Acyuta-Krishna,
Arjuna launched a fierce attack
On Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Targeting
His sandal-paste-smeared arms,
His chest,
Head
And thighs.

22 Firing goat-eared arrows
From his Gāṇḍīva-bow,
Arjuna severely wounded
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
He sliced the reins
Of Aśvatthāman's horses
And they galloped wild
Afar on the battlefield.

23 Afflicted by the arrows
Of Pārtha-Arjuna,
And carried by wind-swift
Horses to a distant spot
On the field of battle,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Thought:
Best not
To return and fight Pārtha-Arjuna:
The intelligent Aṅgirasa Brahmin
Realised victory was inevitable
For Vṛṣṇi Krishna and Arjuna.

24 O respected monarch!
Allowing his horses
Time to rest,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Joined the huge army
Of Karṇa,
Teeming with chariots,
Horses and foot-soldiers.

25 When illustrious-deed-performing
Aśvatthāman
Was removed from the field
By his four horses,
Like a disease expelled
By mantras, medicines,
Care and yoga,

26 Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna,
Riding a flag-fluttering
And cloud-roaring chariot
Advanced to attack the Saṁśaptakas.

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 There was noisy chaos
(continued Sañjaya)
In the northern segment
Of the Pāṇḍava army
Where Daṇḍadhāra was butchering
Chariot-heroes and elephants
And horses and foot-soldiers.

2 Urging the Garuḍa-swift
And wind-fleet horses of his chariot,
Keśava-Krishna said to Arjuna:

3 "Dandadhāra of Magadha
Is an illustrious warrior
Who rides a foe-crushing elephant,
And is in no way inferior
In learning and prowess
To Bhagadatta.

4 It stands to reason
You should kill him first
Before taking on the Saṁśaptakas."
Saying this,
Keśava-Krishna drove Pārtha-Arjuna
In front of Daṇḍahāra.

5 Like the disastrous planet Vikaca-Ketu,
Daṇḍahāra
Wrought havoc among his foes.
Hook-goading his elephant,
He fell upon his foes like
The comet Vikaca-Dhūmaketu.

6 Riding an elephant
That had the strength
Of a Dānava-anti-god elephant,
That trumpeted like
Roaring maha-clouds,
That crushed all foes,
Daṇḍahāra trampled
Chariots
Horses
Musth elephants
And foot-soldiers.

7 That elephant stamped
On chariots and charioteers,
Horses and their riders,
Pulping them. He crushed
Other elephants with his trunk
And feet. He swept
Through the army ranks
Like Kāla-cakra
The Killing Wheel of Calamity.

8 The Magadha warrior
Urged his magnificent elephant
To crusn the iron-armoured
And beautifully decorated
Horse-riders as well as
Their horses and foot-soldiers.
When trampled,
They crackled like snapped
Twelve-feet-high *nala* reeds.

9 Arjuna rode in his splendid chariot
To where
Mṛdaṅga-drums
Bheri-drums
And conches were sounding
Bows twanging
Palms arm-pit-slapping
Teeming with thousands
Of chariots and horses and elephants.

10 Daṇḍadhāra
Targeted Arjuna
With twelve
And Janārdana-Krishna
With sixteen excellent shafts.
He wounded each horse
With three arrows,
And roared and laughed
Repeatedly.

11 With *bhalla*-arrows
Pārtha-Arjuna sliced
Daṇḍadhāra's arrow-fitted bow,
Snapping its bow-string,
And shredded his colourful flag.
Next he killed the elephant's
Driver and protecting foot-soldiers.
The lord of Girivraja, Daṇḍahāra,
Was infuriated by this.

12 Determined to wipe out
Janārdana-Krishna and Arjuna,
He urged forward
His elephant whose temples
Were streaming with ichor,
Who was wind-swift,
And targeted Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
With *comara*-lances.

13 With three razor-arrows
Fired simultaneously
Pāṇḍava-Arjuna sliced
The elephant-trunk-like arms of Daṇḍahāra
And his head as lovely
As the full moon.
Then he deluged
Daṇḍadhāra's elephant
With a hundred arrows.

14 With the gold-ornamented
Arrows of Pārtha-Arjuna
Stuck in his golden armour,
The elephant of Daṇḍahāra
Glowed like a mountain
With its trees and plants
Aflame in a forest-fire
At dead of night.

15 Trumpeting in agony
And roaring like a thunder-cloud,
The elephant
Reeled
Tottered
And toppled
With its driver
On the field
Like a mountain
Riven by a thunderbolt.

16 To avenge the death
Of his brother Daṇḍadhāra
On the battlefield,
Daṇḍa arrived riding
An elephant as massive
As a Himalayan peak,
As white as snow,
Caparisoned in gold.
He was determined to kill
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
And Indra's younger brother
Indrāvaraja-Krishna.

17 With three sharp
Sun-bright *tomara*-lances
Daṇḍa attacked Janārdana-Krishna,
And Arjuna with five,
And roared his war-cry.
Pāṇḍava-Arjuna retaliated
By slicing both his arms.

18 Sliced by razor-arrows,
The magnificently-strong
Smeared-with-sandal-paste
Wearing-*angada*-armlets
Tomara-clutching arms
Fell from the back of the elephant
Like two mahā-serpents
Slithering in splendour
Down a mountain slope.

19 Daṇḍa's head also,
Severed by a half-moon arrow
By diadem-decked Kiriṭin-Arjuna,
Rolled on the ground.
Drenched in its own blood,
It glowed with the splendour
Of the sun fallen
Down the western hills
At the time of its setting.

20 With incomparable arrows
Dazzling like sunrays,
Pārtha-Arjuna
Wounded fatally
That cloud-white elephant.
It collapsed, trumpeting,
And thudded on the ground
Like a Himālayan peak
Shattered by a thunderbolt.

21 One after the other,
The ambidexterous hero Savyasācī-Arjuna
Killed many elephants
As they advanced
Seeking victory,
Exactly as he had killed
The previous two.
Panic spread
In the ranks of the enemy forces.

22 Elephants
Chariot-heroes
Horses
Foot-soldiers
Clashed
And perished
In a carnage
Unparalleled;
Wounded
And wailing
They fell.

23 Like the hosts of gods
Surrounding
Puraṁdara-Indra,
The soldiers surrounded
Arjuna, saying:
"Hero!
The enemy we feared
Like Death itself
Has been killed by you.

24 O foe-annihilator!
If you had failed
To protect your own
From the oppression
Of these powerful foes,
They would have exulted
As we are now exulting
Over their annihilation by you."

25 Arjuna listened to these words
Spoken again and again
By his well-wishers,
And he was pleased.
Offering them formal pūjā-respect,
He left
To recommence
His attack
On the Saṁśaptakas.

SECTION NINETEEN

1 Like the planet Aṅgāraka-Mars
In its elliptical orbit
Boding ill to people,
(continued Sañjaya)
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna swung
His chariot round
And started slaughtering
The Saṁśaptakas.

2 O rājā of the Bharatas!
Pierced by the arrows
Of Pārtha-Arjuna
Foot-soldiers
Horses
Chariot-heroes
Elephants
Wavered, reeled, paled,
Collapsed and died.

3 Fleet horses
Charioteers
War-flags
Bows
Arrows
Swords
Hands
Hand-held weapons
Arms
Heads –

4 With *bhalla*-arrows
Razor-arrows
Half-moon arrows
Calf-toothed arrows
Pāṇḍava Arjuna attacked
And destroyed them all
When confronted
By the enemy forces.

5 Like countless bulls
Picking on a single bull
For attack
In order to mount
A cow in her season,
Hundreds and thousands
Of warriors
Targeted Arjuna.

6 The clash between
Them and him
Was as horripilating
As the clash between
Thunderbolt-wielding Indra
And the Daitya anti-gods
For control of the three worlds.

7 The son of Ugrayudha
Targeted Arjuna with
Three arrows as venomous
As *dandaśūka*-snakes.
Arjuna decapitated him.

8 Then the enraged warriors
Deluged Arjuna
With all manner of weapons
From all sides,
Like wind-driven clouds
Drenching the hills
Of Himavant
At summer-end.

9 Repulsing their weapons
With his counter-weapons,
As they poured in from every side,
Arjuna killed a large number
Of his enemies
With perfectly aimed arrows.

10 Smashing the *triveṇu*-
Segments of chariots,
Slaughtering horses and
Pārṣṇi-charioteers, displacing
Quivers, destroying war-flags
And chariot-wheels,

11 Slicing ropes
And yokes
And axles
And *anukarṣa*-axle-trees
And *yuga*-poles,
Arjuna's arrows
Pulverised them all.

12 Scattered in profusion
On the battlefield,
The disintegrated chariots
Looked like luxurious
Mansions of the rich
Devastated by fire
And wind and storm.

13 Tongues mutilated,
Entrails hanging out,
Blood-smeared,
Gruesome to look at,
Slaughtered by Arjuna, the horses
Toppled along with their riders.

14 Struck by arrows
That sped like lightning,
Elephants toppled
On the ground
Like houses
On mountain slopes
Devastated by thunderbolt
And wind and fire.

Transcreated by P. Lal

15 Respected monarch!
Pierced by the *nārāca*-arrows
Of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
Elephants, horses and men
Swayed and tottered
And screamed and died.

16 Like Mahā-Indra killing
The Dānavas, Pārtha-Arjuna
Killed his foes with stone-
Sharpened arrows, poison-
Virulent and thunderbolt-deadly.

17 They lay on the field,
Slain by Pārtha-Arjuna
In that mahā-battle,
Expensively armoured
And ornamented warriors
In variegated uniforms
Clutching their weapons
Beside chariots and war-flags.

18 They fell indeed,
Those pure-ātmaned noble-born heroes,
But such was their karma
That only their bodies lay on the field –
Their spirits attained heaven.

19 Numerous infuriated rulers
Of many countries,
Supported by their followers,
Advanced to attack
The excellent chariot-hero Arjuna.

20 Swiftly they advanced,
Chariots
Horses
And elephants
Armed with various weapons,
With a single objective:
The annihilation of Arjuna.

21 But Arjuna
was the storm
And the warriors
were mahā-clouds
And the mahā-deluge
of their weapons
Was neutralised
by Arjuna's arrows.

22 Elephants and horses
And chariots and foot-soldiers
And mahā-weapons formed
The ocean Arjuna wanted
To cross with his weapons.

23 Vāsudeva-Krishna
Said to him:
"Defectless Pārtha-Arjuna!
Is this a game
You are playing?
Kill the Saṁśaptakas,
And hurry and kill Karṇa."

24 Saying "So be it!"
To Krishna,
Arjuna began his slaughter
Of the Saṁśaptaka army,
Like Indra
The destroyer of the Dānavas.

25 None on the battlefield
Could make out
When Arjuna nocked his bow,
When he aimed
And when he fired.
All they could see was
The massacre of the soldiers.

26 "Marvellous!"
Said Govinda-Krishna,
Urging the horses forward.
The swan-white and moon-white horses
Slipped inside the ranks
Of the enemy
Like swans in a lake.

27 Seeing the slaughter of soldiers
On the battlefield,
Govinda-Krishna said
To ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna:

28 "Pārtha-Arjuna!
This mahā-carnage
Of the rulers of the Bharata dynasty
And the rulers of the world
Has happened because of Duryodhana.

29 O Bharata descendant!
Look at the heaps
Of gold-backed bows
And quivers
And other weapons
Littering the battlefield!

30 Gold-feathered arrows
Depressed-knot arrows
Oil-polished *nārāca*-arrows
Lying on the ground
Like snakes
That have sloughed their skins.

31 O Bharata descendant!
Tomara-javelins
Of all kinds
Gold-ornamented
And scattered shields
With gold decorations
Of intricate workmanship.

32 Golden *prāsa*-barbed darts
Gold-ornamented śakti-spears
Gigantic maces
    Threaded with gold filigree

33 Gold-plated *ṛṣṭi*-swords
Gold-decorated *paṭṭiṣa*-spears
Gold-ornamented rods
Gold-carved *paraśva*-hatchets

34 *Parigha*-spiked iron clubs
Bhindipāla-slicers
Bhuśuṇḍi-fire-arms
Kuṇapa-spears
Kunta-lances
And massive clubs. . .

35 And the valiant victory-seeking warriors
Still clutching their weapons
Lying dead on the field
But looking as if alive. . .

36 Thousands of sldiers
Mauled and mutilated by elephants
And horses and chariots. . .
Heads pulped
By *musala*-maces and clubs. . .

37 Arrows
Sakti-spears
Ṛṣṭi-swords
Tomara-javelins
Nisiṁtriśa-swords
Paṭṭiśa-pointed spears
Prāsa-barbed darts
Nakhara-curved knives
Laguḍa-clubs
Assaulted
Men
Elephants
And horses

38 Shredding their bodies
Which lay
Blood-drenched
On the field of battle. . .

39 Arms
With bejewelled fingers
Scattered everywhere
Along with other ornaments. . .
Warriors' thighs
Strewn like elephant trunks. . .

40 Decapitated heads
With glittering ear-rings
And head-gems . . .
And countless chariots
With golden *kiṅkiṇi*-bells
Shattered on the battlefield. . .

41 What a splendid spectacle!
Beautiful ornamented arms
Smeared with sandalpaste
And glowing head-gear
Making the field
Colourful . . .

42 And look
At the horses
Smeared with blood . . .
Axles of chariots
Quivers
Flags and pennants
Of all kinds . . .

43 And the pure-white mahā-conches
Of warriors
Side by side
With hill-huge elephants
Sprawled on the field
With lolling tongues . . .

44 Also the *vaijayanti*
Victory flags
And elephant-riders
Fallen from their mounts
And heaps
Of beautifully-embroidered
Coverlets and blankets. . .

45 Ripped and tattered
You can see them
And the details of
Their exquisite designs. . .
And the bells
Of all kinds
Crushed under the bodies
Of dead elephants. . .

46 Rods studded with
Vaidūrya cat's-eyes
And elephant hooks
And elephant hooks
And harnesses of horses
And bejewelled coats-of-mail. . .

47 Entangled with
The flags carried
By horsemen
Are the gold-embroidered
Coverlets of elephants. . .
Look at the gold.
And-gem-encrusted

48 *Raṅku*-deer-skin
Coverlets of horses
Scattered on the field . . .
Head-jewels
Of Indras-among-men
And varieties
Of golden garlands

49 And umbrellas
And chowrie-whisks
And palmleaf fans . . .
Shining like the moon
And the stars,
Glittering with ear-rings,

50 The monstached-and-bearded
Full moon faces
Of decapitated bodies
Shroud
The field of battle.
Like a lake
Lovely
With *kumuda* white lily
And *utpala* blue lotus
And *padma* lotus

51 The battlefield
Blossomed
With the *kumuda* lily
And *utpala* lotus
Faces of the warriors . . .
Like the sky
Scintillating with stars
And the lambent
Loveliness
Of the moon

52 The battlefield
Glowed
With splendour
As if decorated
With garlands
Of constellations of stars
In autumn . . . .
Arjuna!
The valour you have shown
In this mahā-battle

53 Is worthy of you
And is worthy
Of the rājā of the gods Indra."
Even as Krishna
Was showing
The spectacle
Of the battlefield
To diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna,

54 He heard
Mahā-noises
Coming from the camps
Of Duryodhana's army:
Saṅ kha-conches
Dundubhi-drums
Bheri-kettledrums
Pāṇava-cymbals

55 Neighing of chariot-steeds
Trumpeting of elephants
And the dreadful din
Of weapons
Getting ready for combat. . . .
Penetrating that army
With wind-swift horses, Krishna

56 Was astonished to see
How your army had been routed
By the Pāṇḍya ruler.
With a variety of arrows,
That weapons-expert hero

57 Had slaughtered
His enemy's ranks
Like Antaka the god of death
Snuffing out the lives of creatures.
Slicing through elephants
And horses and soldiers
With sharp arrows,

58 That incomparable hero
Struck down his foes,
Decimating their bodies
And stealing their life-breaths.
Like Śakra-Indra
Wiping out the hordes of anti-gods,
The Pāṇḍya ruler
Repulsed the weapons
Of his foes, and then
Began slaughtering them.

SECTION TWENTY

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"You did mention Pāṇḍya
Earlier as world-renowned,
But you never described
His valiant karma
On the field of battle.

2 Tell me all in detail:
His valour
Learning
Glory
Heroism
Strength and pride."

3 Sañjaya replied:
You consider
The finest chariot-heroes
And the finest bowmen
To be
Bhīṣma
Droṇa
Kṛpa
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Karṇa
Arjuna
Janārdana-Krishna

4 But he considered
These mahā-chariot-heroes
Inferior to him.
That lord-among-men
Thought none of them
Comparable to him.

5 He did not consider
Even Droṇa and Bhīṣma
Equal to him.
And certainly he
Did not think himself
Inferior to Vāsudeva-Krishna
And Arjuna.

6 The excellent king
Pāṇḍya
Well-versed
In all war-weapons
Systematically slaughtered
The army of Karṇa
As Antaka
The god of death
Would if insulted.

7 The army of Karṇa
Was a massive force
Of chariots
And elephants
And horses
And brave foot-soldiers
But the attacks
Of the Pāṇḍya ruler
Made them whirl
Round and round
Like a potter's wheel.

8 Like a storm scattering clouds
Pāṇḍya
With excellently aimed arrows
Destroyed horses
Charioteers
War-flags
And chariots
Smashing weapons
And felling elephants.

9 Like Indra the mountain-pulveriser
Battering mountains
With his thunderbolt
Pāṇḍya killed
Elephants and their riders
And the foot-soldiers
Guarding them
And destroyed their weapons
And war-flags.

10 He slaughtered horses
And their riders
Armed with śakti-spears
Prāsa-barbed darts
And quivers.
Pulindas
Khasas
Bāhlīkas
Niṣādas
Āndhras
Kuntalas

11 Dakṣiṇātyas
And Bhojas –
All these dedicated
And valiant heroes
Were first deprived
Of their weapons
And coats-of-mail
And then cut down by his arrows.

12 Seeing the relentless
Slaughter of the four-fold
Army of Karṇa
So casually achieved by Pāṇḍya,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Fearlessly confronted him.

13 Speaking sweetly
And without a trace of fear,
The finest of warriors aśvatthāman smiled
And challenged the Pāṇḍya ruler:

14 "O rājā!
O lotus-eyed one!
O noble-lineaged lord!
O learned one!
O lightning-powerful one!
O famed-for-strength monarch!

15 When you pull
Your bowstring
And stretch your bow
With your powerful arms
You look magnificent
Like a conglomeration
Of mahā-clouds,

16 And when with mahā-speed
You shower torrents
Of arrows on your foes
There is no hero
Who can face you
On the field except me.

17 Single-handed
You have destroyed
Chariots and elephants
And horses and foot-soldiers
Like a fearsome lion
Slaughtering herds of deer.

18 O lord of the earth!
When sky and earth
Reverberate with the rattle
Of your chariot-wheels
You are like the roaring
All-destroying cloud-masses
That appear
At the end of the monsoon.

19 Fight with me then!
Fight me
Like the anti-god Andhaka
Battling three-eyed Tryambaka-Śiva!
Remove your snake-poison
Arrows from your quiver!"

20 Saying "So be it! You strike first!"
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Was attacked by Pāṇḍya Malayadhvaja
With a *karṇi*-arrow.

21 Ācārya Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman retaliated
Against the Pāṇḍya king
With flame-bright
Marrow-piercing
Swift-speeding arrows.

22 He followed the attack
With sharp *nārāca*-arrows
Shot in the ten-fold
Technique of bowcraft:
Unmukhi aimed at the head
Abhimukhi at the chest
Tiryak below the chest
Mandā the skin-piercing
Gomūtrikā the armour-shredding
Dhruvā the target-destroying
Skhalitā the weapon-deflecting
Yamakākrāntā the target-penetrating
Kruṣṭā the minute-targeting
Atikruṣṭā the decapitating.

23 The Pāṇḍya king
Repulsed them all
With nine arrows,
And with another four
He killed the four horses.

24 With arrows that shone
With the splendour of the sun
Pāṇḍya disintegrated
The arrows of Droṇa's son
And sliced his bow-string.

25 Re-stringing his bow
And quickly ordering his men
To yoke fresh horses
To his chariot.
The foe-annihilating
Son of Droṇa,
Aśvatthāman

26 The twice-born hero
Released thousands of arrows
Which shrouded the sky
And all the directions.

27 Though aware
That the arrows
Of Droṇa's mahā-ātmaned son
Aśvatthāman
Were ceaseless and invulnerable
Bull-brave Pāṇḍya
Continued his efforts
To disintegrate them.

28 Assiduously neutralising the arrows
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
The Pāṇḍya king
Killed the two wheel-protectors
Of Aśvatthāman
With sharp arrows.

29 Seeing the dexterity of the Pāṇḍya king,
Droṇa's son stretched
His bow into a full maṇḍala
And shot torrents of arrows
Like Pūṣan's yunger brother
Parjanya the rain god
Pouring a deluge of showers.

30 O respectworthy lord!
In the eighth part
Of a day, Droṇa's son
Used up as many weapons
As can be carried
By eight bullocks
Pulling eight carts.

31 He looked like the *Antaka*-doom
Of enraged Antaka the god of death.
Whoever looked at him
Lost consciousness.

32 Ācārya Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Drowned the army
In a deluge of arrows
Like congregated clouds
Flooding with rain
At end of summer
The tree-and-mountained earth.

33 Droṇa's son
Was the rain god Parjanya
Shooting terrifying showers of arrows
Which the Pāṇḍya king
Smilingly repulsed with
His Vāyavya wind-missile.

34 Droṇa's son roared and shredded
The sandal-paste and *aguru-*
Scented Malaya-hill-high
War-flag of Pāṇḍya
And killed his four horses.

35 With a single arrow
He killed Pāṇḍya's charioteer;
With a half-moon arrow
He sliced his foe's mahā-cloud-booming bow;
After which he shattered Pāṇḍya's chariot.

36 Neutralising and disintegrating
The weapons of his foe,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Impelled by his passion
For face-to-face combat,
Refrained from killing
His disarmed opponent.

37 In the meantime
Karṇa attacked the elephant
Division of the Pāṇḍavas,
After which he concentrated on
Their main mahā-army.

38 O Bharata descendant!
Shattering the chariots of the Pāṇḍavas,
Slaughtering horses
And elephants,
With knotted arrows
He wrought havoc.

39 The mahā-bowman son
Of Droṇa refrained
From killing foe-smiting
Excelling chariot-hero Pāṇḍya
After uncharioting him
Because he was eager for further combat.

40 Wounded by Aśvatthāman's arrows,
A magnificent, powerful,
Richly caparisoned, furious,
Rider-less elephant
Shot through the ranks
And charged towards Pāṇḍya.

41 Expert in elephant-combat,
The Pāṇḍya ruler Malayadhvaja
Nimbly jumped on the back
Of that hill-huge elephant
Like a roaring lion
Running
Up a mountain summit.

42 The lord of Malaya-hill,
The Pāṇḍya ruler,
Expert in hurling weapons,
Struck the elephant,
And roaring his war-cry,
He aimed a *tomara*-javelin
That dazzled
With the splendour of the sun
And flung it at Aśvatthāman,
The son of guru Droṇa.

43 "Killed! Killed!"
He shouted in joy
As he javelin
Struck and splintered
Aśvatthāman's diadem
Studded with
Jewels
Diamonds
Gold
And decorated
With silk tassels and garlands.

44 Sun-bright
Moon-bright
Planet-bright
Fire-bright
The diadem disintegrated
Like a mountain-peak shattered
By Mahendra-Indra's thunderbolt
With a mahā-deafening din.

45 Like a snake trodden underfoot,
Aśvatthāman blazed with anger.
He selected fourteen
Foe-annihilating arrows
Each resembling
The rod of Antaka the god of death.

46 With four arrows
He sliced the elephant's legs,
With one his trunk.
With three arrows
He cut off the arms of the Pāṇḍya king
And decapitated him.
With the remaining six
He killed the splendid
Mahā-chariot-heroes protecting
The Pāṇḍya rājā.

47 Handsome
Long
Round
Sandal-paste-smeared
Ornamented with
Gold
Pearls
Diamonds
Gems –
The two arms
Fell on the ground
Writhing like two snakes
Killed by Tārkṣya-Garuḍa.

48 The full-moon head
Large eyed
Copper-red with anger
Long-nosed
Dazzled on the ground
With its two ear-rings
Glittering like two constellations.

49 The elephant
Was sliced in six pieces
By five splendid arrows.
The king himself
Was sliced in four
By three arrows.
Ten pieces skilfully sliced
Like ten sacrificial offerings
In the sacred fire
To ten deities.

50 So king Pāṇḍva
Slaughtered horses
And men and elephants
As food for Rākṣasas
And appeased the pitṛ-
Spirits of his forefathers
Like the funeral pyre consuming
Corpses – and was himself
Stilled, like soft-flowing water.

51 Your son
King Duryodhana and his friends
Went to Guru Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
And happily offered pūjā
To the all-learned
And all-task-accomplishing hero –
Even as Indra
The lord of the immortals
Iffered pūjā to Viṣṇu
After Bali was defeated.

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"Tell me:
When Pāṇḍya was killed
And the incomparable hero
Karna routed his foes,
What did Arjuna do?

2 Devoted to duty,
Brilliant in bravery,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna was assured
By mahā-ātmaned Śaṅkara-Śiva,
'No one will defeat you.'

3 Sañjaya!
My one mahā-fear
Is foe-annihilating Arjuna
Tell me in detail
What Pārtha-Arjuna did."

4 O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
After Pāṇḍya died
Krishna quickly said to Arjuna:
"I see no sign
Of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira anywhere.
Nor the other Pāṇḍavas.

5 Even when retreating
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
Wrought havoc in the ranks
Of his foes,
And Karṇa implemented
Aśvatthāman's plan
By slaughtering the Sṛñjayas,

6 Along with a mahā-massacre
Of horses and elephants
And destruction of chariots."
Heroic Vasudeva-Krishna
Gave this information
To diadem-decked Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

7 Pāṇḍava Arjuna listened
And realising
The mahā-fearful predicament
Of his eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira
He said: "Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna!
Drive me quickly there."

8 Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna raced
That impossible-to-repulse-in-battle vehicle
To the battlefield
Where the armies were locked
In fierce clashes.

9 The Kauravas
And the Pāṇḍavas
Face to face
In fearless battle!
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
Led by Bhīma,
And we by Karṇa
The charioteer's son.

10 O excellent monarch!
Karṇa battled the Pāṇḍavas
Adding to the population
Of the kingdom of Yama!

11 Bows and arrows and swords
Parigha spiked iron clubs
Paṭṭiśa pointed spears
Tomara-javelins
Musala-maces
Bhuśuṇḍi-firearms
Śakti-spears and *ṛṣṭi*-lances
Paraśu-hatchets

12 *Gadā*-clubs
Prāsa-barbed darts
Kunta-lances
Bhindipāla-slicers
Mahā goads and hooks –
Armed with these weapons
The warriors attacked.

13 The directions
And the sub-directions
And the sky
And the inter-space
Eachoed
And re-echoed
With the twanging
Of bowstrings
And the clatter
Of chariot-wheels
As the warriors of both armies
Pounced on their foes.

14 Eager to survive
The mahā-horrendous conflict
Yet revelling in the noise
The heroes on both sides
Fought on valiantly.

15 What a cacophony!
Bowstrings
Hand-protectors
Bows
Elephants trumpeting
Foot-soldiers toppling. . .
A deafening mahā-noise
Of humans in agony!

16 Struck with terror
By arm-pit slaps
Reverberating on the field,
Even veteran soldiers
Trembled and paled and collapsed.

17 Adhiratha's heroic son Karṇa
Screamed his war-cry
And letting loose
A deluge of weapons
Killed innumerable foes
With a volley of arrows.

18 With volleys of arrows
Karṇa annihilated successively
First five
Then ten
Then another five
Pāñcāla chariot-heroes
Along with their charioteers
And horses and war-flags.

19 The mahā-heroic Pāṇḍavas
Swiftly deployed their finest warriors
And manouvered and encircled Karṇa.

20 But Karṇa's arrows
Routed them all
And he penetrated their ranks
Like a king elephant
Plunging in a lake
And trampling birds and lotuses.

21 Rādhā's son Karṇa
Stood in the middle
Of his foes' ranks
And brandished his brilliant bow
Slicing the heads
Of his foes one by one
With sharp arrows.

22 Fragments of shattered shields
And coats-of-mail
Fell on the field.
A single arrow sufficed:
No warrior needed felling
With a second from Karṇa.

23 Like a horseman whipping steeds,
Karna, harassed his foes
Targeting the *talatra* arm-guards
Of his foes
With armour-, body-
And life-piercing arrows.

24 Like a lion slaughtering
A herd of deer
In his field of vision
Karṇa slaughtered
Whatever Pāṇḍava soldiers
And Sṛñjayas
And Pāñcālas
Came in the range of his bow.

25 O respected monarch!
The Pāñcāla-rājā Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Draupadī's sons and the twins
And Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
Collectively attacked Karṇa.

26 Even as the Kauravas
The Pāñcālas
And the Pāṇḍavas
Were locked in battle,
Countless other soldiers
Martyred themselves
In mutual slaughter.

27 Mahā-powerful warriors
Well-buckled and armour-clad
With glittering head-gear
Brandishing maces
Musala-clubs
Parigha-spiked iron clubs

28 That resembled
The rod of Kāla
The Spirit of Cosmic Doom
Roared their challenge
And jumped and charged
Against their foes,
O respected monarch!

29 Their heads
Their eyes
Their weapons
Crushed
The warriors collapsed on the field
In pools of blood
Streaming from their bodies.

30 They fell on the field
Covered with weapons,
Their bloodied faces
As beautiful
As split pomegrantes,
Their reeth the seeds.

31 *Paraśu*-hatchets
Paṭṭisa-pointed spears
Swords and śakti-spears
Bhindipāla-firearms
Nakhara-curved knives
Tomara-lances –

32 With these weapons
The maddened warriors
Crushed
Bludgeoned
Mutilated
Severed
And slaughtered each other
In that oceanic war.

33 Splattered with blood
They fell lifeless on the field of battle
Like chopped sandalwood trees
Spilling red sap.

34 Thousands upon thousands
Littered the field –
Chariot-heroes killing chariot-heroes
Horse-riders killing horse-riders
Elephants killing elephants
Foot-soldiers killing foot-soldiers.

35 War-flags
Heads
Umbrellas
Elephant-trunks
Warrior's arms
Fell on the field
Sliced
By razor-arrows
Bhalla-arrows
And half-moon arrows.

36 So many horsemen slaughtered
So many brave warriors,
And lopped off
The tusks and trunks
Of so many elephants!
The trunkless beasts
Trampled
So many soldiers and horses
And elephants and chariots!

37 And then
They themselves collapsed
Like massive flag-topped mountains.
So many elephants
Attacked by leaping soldiers

38 Lay dead on the field
Near so many slain charioteers
In their shattered chariots.
So many foolhardy horse-riders
Were killed
As they attacked brave foot-soldiers!

39 So many foot-soldiers also
Killed by horse-riders
Littered the field
Their faces like crushed lotuses
And faded garlands.

40 In that mahā-war
They slept eternally
On the field.
O king!
Handsome men
Magnificent elephants
Splendid horses
Lay on the field
Like tattered and filthy
Pieces of cloth.
A sorry sight!
An eye-disgusting spectacle!

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Urged by your son
(continued Sañjaya)
Countless mahā-elephant-warriors
Angrily attacked Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Determined to kill him.

2 From the East and the South
They came –
These elephant-warriors;
From Aṅga
Baṅga
Puṇḍra
Magadha
Tāmralipta

3 Mekala
Kosala
Madra
Daśārṇa
Niṣadha
All of them
Excellent in elephant-combat.
O descendant of Bharata!
Along with the Kaliṅgas

4 They resembled
An army of rain-clouds
As they drowned
The ranks of the Pāñcālas
With arrows
Tomara-lances
And *nārāca*-shafts.

5 Inspired by their desire
To crush their foes,
These elephant-warriors
Goaded their beasts
With heels and toes
And *aṅkusa*-hooks,
While Dhṛṣṭadyumna rained
A torrent of *nārāca*-arrows.

6 O Bharata descendant!
Each elephant was targeted
By Dhṛṣṭadyumna
With ten or six or eight
Sharp arrows.

7 The Pāṇḍavas and the Pāñcālas
Uttering fierce war-cries
Marched fully armed
Towards Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Who was surrounded by elephants
Like the sun enveloped by massive clouds.

8 Twanging their bowstrings
And slapping their arm-pits
The warriors danced
To the beat of the music
The dance that is worthy of warriors
And rained their arrows.
Nakula
Sahadeva
The sons of Draupadī
The Prabhadrakas

9 Sātyaki
Śikhaṇḍin
Cekitāna –
These heroes
Drenched the elephants
With arrows
Like rain-clouds
Drenching mountains.

10 Urged by Mleccha warriors
The infuriated elephants
Swung their trunks
To pick up soldiers
And dashed them on the ground
And trampled them.

11 Goring others with tusks
They gouged and pulped them.
Still others
Were tossed in the air
After tusking.

12 With a fearsome sharp *nārāca*-arrow
Sātyaki sliced
The vital parts of the elephant
Of the ruler of Baṅga
And felled the beast.

13 With another *nārāca*
Sātyaki pierced
The chest of the ruler
Before the elephant toppled.
Wounded,
The ruler fell on the field.

14 In another part of the field
Sahadeva fired
Three *nārācas* at the elephant
Of the Puṇḍra ruler
Who was lording the field
Like a moving mountain.

15 Depriving the elephant
Of war-flag
Driver
Armour
Banner
And life
Sahadeva concentrated next
On the ruler of Aṅga.

16 But Nakula pre-empted Sahadeva
And with three *nārācas*
Each as deadly as the rod of Yama
The god of death
He wounded the Aṅga ruler;
With another hundred
He wounded Aṅga's elephant.

17 The Aṅga ruler retaliated
With a hundred sun-bright
Tomara-lances, which Nakula
Shattered into three fragments each.

18 With a half-moon arrow
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
Sliced the head of the Aṅga-ruler.
Decapitated, the Mleccha king
Toppled off the elephant's back.

19 Enraged by the death of their prince
Who was well-versed
In the art of elephant-combat
The Aṅga elephant-warriors
Launched a mahā-offensive against Nakula.

20 Flags fluttering
Gold-caparisoned
Magnificent-faced
Like flaming mountains
Those vigorous elephants
Rushed to destroy Nakula.

21 Eager to kill Nakula
The Mekalas
Utkalas
Kaliṅgas
Niṣadhas
And Tāmaraliptas
Deluged him
With arrows
And *tomara*-lances.

22 The Pāṇḍavas
Pāñcālas
And Somakas
Angrily rushed
To the rescue of Nakula
Whom those warriors
Had surrounded
Like dark rain-clouds
Shrouding the sun.

23 A dreadful clash –
Between chariot-heroes
And elephant-warriors
With the chariot-heroes
Deluging their adversaries
With arrow-showers
And hundreds upon hundreds
Of *tomara*-lances,

24 Mangling and mutilating
The remples and other vital parts
Of the elephants
With *nārāca*-arrows
And shattering their tusks
And war-equipment.

25 With sixty-four arrows
Sahadeva killed
Eight mahā-elephants
Who toppled along with their riders.

26 The darling-and-delight-of-his-family
Nakula
Carefully nocked
A magnificent bow
And killed countless elephants
With *nārāca*-arrows.

27 The Pāñcāla Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
Draupadī's sons
The Prabhadrakas
And Śikhaṇḍin
Also shot showers of arrows
On those mahā-elephants.

28 Like hill crests
Downed by lightning-bolts
The arrow-showers
Of the Pāṇḍava rain-clouds
Felled the elephant-hills
Of their foes

29 With his massacre
Of your elephant divisions,
The Pāṇḍava chariot-heroes
Saw your army
Flee the field
Like a river
Breaking its banks
And spilling in all directions.

30 Then the armies
Of Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
Having routed your forces,
Turned their might
Again against Karṇa

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 Mahārāja (continued Sañjaya),
Enraged Sahadeva attacked
Your army, and his cousin-brother
Duḥśāsana opposed him.

2 On the battlefield
The mahā-chariot-heroes
Saw the two
Locked in a mahā-clash
And started roaring their war-cries
And flapping their dresses.

3 O Bharata descendant!
Your brilliant-in-bowcraft son
Duḥśāsana
Wounded brave Sahadeva
In the chest
With three arrows.

4 O rājā!
Having wounded your son
With a single *nārāca*,
Sahadeva fired seventy more arrows,
And pierced the charioteer
With another three

5 O rājā!
In that mahā-clash
Duḥśāsana sliced the bow
Of Sahadeva
And struck his chest and arms
With seventy-three arrows.

6 In that mahā-clash
Sahadeva, infuriated,
Lifted his sword,
Whirled it above his head
And hurled it at the chariot
Of your son Duḥśāsana.

7 Slicing your son's bow,
Arrow and bowstring,
That maha-sword
Plummeted
On the earth
Like a snake
Slithering down the sky.

8 Illustrious Sahadeva
Swiftly readied another bow
And targeted Duḥśāsana
With an arrow
Of death-dealing power.

9 Duḥśāsana
Of the Kaurava dynasty
Saw that arrow
Fatal like the rod
Of Yama, god of death,
Speeding towards him
And sliced it in two
With his sharp sword.

10 Whirling that sharp sword
On the field of battle,
He hurled it
At Sahadeva,
And swiftly nocked
Another bow.

11 Smiling,
Sahadeva aimed
His keen arrows
At the speeding sword
And sliced it
Into fragments
On the battlefield.

12 O Bharata descendant!
In the course
Of that mahā-battle,
Your son Duḥśāsana
Swiftly released
Sixty-four arrows
At Sahadeva's chariot.

13 O rājā!
Targeting each
Swift-speeding arrow
With five of his own,
Sahadeva disintegrated
Them all.

14 Having destroyed
All those mahā-shafts
Fired by your son,
Sahadeva retaliated
With countless arrows
Of his own.

15 But your son
Neutralised all of them
With three arrows each-
He roared
His maha-war-cry.
The entire earth
Reverberated
With the noise.

16 O rājā!
After wounding Pāṇḍu's son
Sahadeva,
Duḥśāsana pierced the charioteer
Of Mādrī's son Sahadeva
With nine arrows.

17 Mahārāja!
This so enraged
Illustrious Sahadeva
That he nocked his bow
With an arrow
As fearful and fatal
As Mṛtyu-Death
Kala the Spirit of Cosmic Time
And Antaka the End-of-All.

18 Slowly
Carefully
Powerfully
He pulled the bowstring
Ear-taut
And fired it at your son.
With tremendous force
It sliced
The formidable armour

19 On your son's body
And slid into the earth,
O rājā,
Like a snake
Slipping
Inside an ant-hill.
O rajā!
Your mahā-chariot-hero son
Became unconscious.

20 Seeing him senseless,
His charioteer
Raced him to safety
Through a shower of sharp arrows.

21 Routing the Kaurava Duḥśāsana,
Pāṇḍu's son Sahadeva
Targeted the army of Duryodhana
With a multi-pronged offensive.

22 O Bharata descendant!
The Kaurava ranks
Were crushed by Sahadeva
Like a colony of ants
Ground underfoot
By an angry mortal.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 O rājā (continued Sañjaya),
It was Karṇa
The flesh-sliced hero
Who angrily succeeded
In restraining
Carnage-creating Nakula.

2 Nakula smiled
And said to Karṇa:
"Fate is kind to me.
I see you face to face
After so long a time.

3 Wicked one!
Look at me!
I stand facing you
On the battlefield.
You are the root
Of this bitterness and bloodshed.

4 You are to blame
For the dwindling
Of the Kauravas!
I will have done my duty
By killing you in battle today
And by so doing
I'll free myself
From fever and pain."

5 The charioteer's son Karṇa
Replied to Nakula:
"Be the rājā's son
That you are,
Be the brilliant bowman
That you are.

6 Fight me, O brave one!
Let me see how much
Of a man you are!
Let's see your karma
On the field of battle!
Deeds first – then words!

7 *Tātā!* Dear one! Little one!
Real heroes don't talk.
They keep busy
Displaying their śakti.
Use all your śakti
Against me today.
I'll crush your pride."

8 Saying this,
The charioteer's son Karna
Attacked Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
With seventy-three arrows.

9 O Bharata descendant!
Wounded by the arrows
Of the charioteer's son,
Nakula retaliated
With a volley of eighty
Snake-venomed arrows.

10 Foremost of bowmen Karṇa
Sliced the bow of Pāṇḍava Nakula
With stone-sharpened
Gold-feathered arrows,
And pinned him down
With thirty more arrows.

11 Like venomous snakes
Wriggling
Into the earth
To drink water
The arrows pierced
Nakula's armour
And drank his blood.

12 Nakula nocked
Another formidable
Gold-ornamented bow
And wounded Karṇa
With seventy arrows;
With three more
He wounded Karṇa's charioteer.

13 Mahārāja!
Enraged,
The foe-annihilating hero Nakula
Sliced Karṇa's bow
With razor-sharp arrows.

14 Smiling,
Heroic Nakula
Fired three hundred arrows
At the finest-
Of-mahā-chariot-heroes,
Bow-shattered Karṇa.

15 O respected one!
Seeing Karṇa humbled
By Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
The chariot-heroes
And even the gods
Were supremely astonished.

16 Flesh-sliced Vaikartana-Karṇa
Fitted another bow
And targeted
The collar-bone of Nakula
With five arrows.

17 With those arrows
Sticking in his body
The son of Mādrī
Blazed
With the splendour
Of the sun
Shooting its rays
On the earth.

18 O respected one!
With seven arrows
Nakula
Wounded Karṇa
And cut off
One end of his bow.

19 Karṇa
Fitted another
Even stronger bow
And shrouded
All the four sides
Around Nakula
With volleys of arrows.

20 The mahā-chariot-hero
Nakula
Retaliated
With counter-volleys
That dispersed
The enveloping shroud
Created by Karṇa.

21 A network
Of arrows
Floating
In the firmament!
Like countless
Flickering fireflies!

[VIII:24:22-26]

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22 Lord of the earth!
Hundreds upon hundreds
Of arrows
Floating
In the firmament! –
Like swarms
Of locusts!

23 Gold-ornamented arrows
Streaming
Across the firmament! –
Like rows
Of *krauñca*-ospreys
Flying in formation
Across the sky!

24 The sky
Shrouded
With arrows,
The sun
Darkened,
No sky-roving life
Could be seen roaming
On earth.

25 Swarms of arrows
Blocking all directions –
The two
Mahā-ātmaned heroes
Shone like two suns
Materialising at the time
Of Kāla's final dissolution.

26 O Indra-among-rājās!
Pierced by the arrows of Karṇa,
The Somakas
Screamed in agony
And fled helter-skelter.

27 And your soldiers too,
O rājā,
Pierced by the arrows of Nakula,
Scattered on all sides
Like clouds
Dispersed by a storm.

28 Terrorised
By the celestial mahā-arrows,
The soldiers
Of both armies
Fled to safety
And stood as spectators.

29 With all warriors gone
And the field bare,
The two mahā-ātmaned heroes
Facing each other
Deluged each other with arrows.

30 Displaying their skills
With celestial weapons,
Determined to kill each other,
The two adversaries
Shrouded each other
With volleys of arrows.

31 *Kaṅka*-feathered
Peacock-feathered
The arrows of Nakula
Shrouded Karṇa
The charioteer's son
And seemed to stand still
In the sky.

32 Similarly
The arrows fired
By the charioteer's son Karṇa
Against Nakula
Seemed to stand still
In the sky.

33 O rājā!
So enshrouded
Were the two combatants
That none could see them –
Like the sun and the moon
When blanketed by clouds.

34 Enraged Karṇa
Assumed a fearful shape
And from all four sides
He enveloped Pāṇḍava Nakula
In a shower of arrows.

35 O rājā! Mahārāja!
Though shrouded totally
By Karṇa's arrows,
Nakula was unperturbed,
Like the light-giving sun
Undismayed by clouds.

36 O respected one!
Adhiratha's son Karṇa smiled
And again released
Hundreds and thousands
Of arrows
To form another network.

37 The arrows fired
By mahā-ātmaned Karṇa
Darkened
The entire battlefield
Like clouds
Blurring a landscape.

38 Mahārāja!
Slicing the bow of Nakula
The mahā-ātmaned one,
Karṇa smiled
And shot Nakula's charioteer
Straight out of his chariot.

39 O Bharata descendant!
With four sharp arrows
Karṇa despatched
The four horses of Nakula
To the mansion
Of the god of death Yama.

40 O respected one!
Next with his arrows
He shattered
The celestial chariot of Nakula
With its war-flag
Wheel-protectors
Mace and sword

41 Hundred-moon-embossed shield
And other war equipment.
Lord of the earth!
Horses slaughtered,
Chariot and armour shattered,

42 Nakula leapt to safety
From his chariot
And stood on the field
Brandishing
A *parigha* spiked iron club.
The charioteer's son Karṇa
Splintered the mahā-terrifying *parigha*,

43 O rājā,
With super-sharp arrows
Designed for exceptional performance.
Seeing him un-weaponed,
Karṇa harassed him
With depressed-knot arrows –

44 Many of them – but failed
To unnerve him.
The valiant weapons-expert Nakula,
Thus afflicted,

45 O rājā,
Unexpectedly
Suddenly
Succumbing to weakness
Fled the field.
Laughing repeatedly
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Chased him,

46 O Bharata descendant,
And looped his bow
Round Nakula's neck.
O rājā!
That maha-bow
Round Nakula's neck
Looked as lovely

47 As a halo
Round the moon,
As a rainbow
Round a cloud. Lovely!

48 Karṇa said to Nakula:
"Your words are worthless.
I'll hit you again and again.
Smile!
Talk big again!

49 O Pāṇḍava,
Don't fight the brave Kauravas.
Tāta! Dear one!
Fight your equals.
No shame in that, O Pāṇḍava.

50 Better still,
Mādrī's son,
Go home to Krishna
And Phālguna-Arjuna."
Saying this, mahārāja,
He released Nakula.

51 O rājā!
He could easily have killed Nakula
But dharma-conscious Karna
Recalled his pledge to Kuntī
And spared Nakula.

52 O rājā!
Spared by the brilliant bowman Karṇa,
The son of a charioteer,
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula,
Ashamed,
Approached Yudhiṣṭhira's chariot.

53 Sighing heavily
Like a snake trapped
Inside a pot,
Because the charioteer's son
Had humiliated him,
Nakula climbed into the chariot.

54 After defeating Nakula,
Karṇa drove his chariot,
Pulled by moon-white horses
And flying high war-flags,
Swiftly
To the ranks of the Pāñcālas.

55 Lord of the earth!
A maha-uproar
Shook the ranks of the Pāṇḍavas
When they saw
The Kaurava general Karṇa
Marching against
The Pāñcāla chariot-heroes.

56 Mahārāja! At noon
The charioteer's son
Powerful Karṇa
Manoeuvring like a *cakra*
Started his slaughter
Of the enemy ranks.

57 O respected one!
Shattered chariot wheels
Shredded war-flags and banners
Slaughtered steeds
Slain charioteers
Broken axles –

58 Such was the state
Of the fleeing chariot-heroes
Of the Pāñcāla ranks.
Dazed elephants
Ran wild here and there

59 On the field of that mahā-battle
Like elephants scorched
In a forest fire.
Many elephant had temples mutilated
With blood streaming
Down their bodies,
And shattered trunks . . .

60 Targeted by Karṇa
The maha-atmaned hero,
Their tails lopped off,
Their armours ripped,
They toppled on the field
Like massive clouds.

61 Other elephants,
Pierced by Karṇa's *nārāca*-arrows
And *tomara*-lances,
Rushed towards Karṇa
Like moths into a flame.

62 Blood streaming
Down their bodies
Like rivers down hill slopes,
Other mahā-elephants
Trumpeted
Agonising screams.

63 So many horses –
Breast-plates shredded
Mane-bands sliced
Silver-brass-and-gold decorations
destroyed

64 Other trappings also
Bridle-bits
Yak-tail fans
Saddle-cloths
Quivers
destroyed

65 And their majestic riders
On the battlefield
Heroic riders killed –
All this we witnessed –
Superlative steeds
Mutilated
Confused
Staggering on the field.

66 O Bharata descendant!
We witnessed
So many horsemen
With armour and head-gear
Deprived of their *prāsa*-barbed darts
Khaṅga-scimitars
Ṛṣṭi-swords

67 Lying dead
On the battlefield.
So many others,
O Bharata,
Shaking in fear,
And still others,
O Bharata,
Lay on the ground
With limbs
Chopped and mangled.

68 We saw golden chariots
To which were yoked
The swiftest horses
Speeding away empty,
Their charioteers
And riders
Killed.

69 O Bharata descendant!
Akṣa-axles shattered
Kubara-poles smashed
War-flags torn
Pennants shredded
Īṣā-shafts with lovely decorations
toppled . . .

70 Lord of the earth!
So many chariot-heroes
Were fleeing helter-skelter
From the sharp arrows
Fired by Karṇa the charioteer's son

71 Some of them
Were weaponless;
Others were killed
Still clutching their weapons.
Clad in star-studded armour,
With beautiful bells tinkling,

72 Multi-coloured pennants
Fluttering,
Were the elephants
We saw
Fleeing in all directions.

73 We saw soldiers'
Heads
Arms
Thighs
Sliced by Karṇa's arrows
Littering the field.

74 What a fearful mahā-gruesome fate
Overtook the soldiers
Who fought
With keen arrows
Against the superior shafts of Karṇa!

75 The charioteer's son Karṇa
Continued to butcher them
Yet the Sṛñjayas
Kept rushing at him
Like swarms of moths
Into a fire.

76 Like the fire
Of Yugānta
The End-of-Yuga Dissolution,
Mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa
Consumed the Kṣatriyas
Trying to flee the flames.

77 Seeing
The mahā-chariot-heroes
Of the army of the Pāñcālas
Fleeing
The field of battle,
Heroic Karṇa
Chased them relentlessly,
Shooting streams of arrows,

78 Ripping their armours
And shredding
Their war-flags.
The maha-powerful son of a charioteer
Persecuted them
With his arrows
Like the blazing sun at noon
Scorching all creatures.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 In the meantime
(continued Sañjaya),
Ulūka attacked Yuyutsu
Who was decimating
Your mahā-army.
Uluka shouted:
“Wait! Stand where you are!”

2 O rājā!
With a sharp-edged arrow
Fitted with wings
Yuyutsu attacked Ulūka
Like Indra attacking
A mountain with hightning.

3 Infuriated, Ulūka retaliated
With a razor-arrow slicing
Yuyutsu’s bow, and fired
A *karṇī* arrow at him.

4 Yuyutsu flung aside
His splintered bow.
Eyes red with anger,
He swiftly readied
Another massive bow.

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
With sixty arrows
He pinned down Śakuni’s son Ulūka;
With three arrows
He wounded the charioteer;
And continued to attack.

6 This so enraged Ulūka
On the battlefield
That the wounded Yuyutsu
With sixty gold-filigreed arrows
And shredded
His gold-embroidered war-flag.

7 O rājā!
That magnificent gold-filigreed mahā-war-flag,
Its staff shattered,
Fell in front of Yuyutsu.

8 So enraged
Was Yuyutsu
By the destruction
Of his flagstaff
That he nearly fainted –
But he recovered
And pierced Ulūka's chest
With five arrows.

9 Respected one!
O finest of the Bharatas!
With a *bhalla*-arrow
Polished with oil
Uluka decapitated
The charioteer of Yuyutsu.

10 The head of Yuyutsu's charioteer
Hurtled on the ground
Like a star
Falling from the sky.

11 Killing all four horses,
Ulūka wounded Yuyutsu
With five arrows.
Attacked
By valiant Ulūka,
Yuyutsu fled
From the battlefield
In another chariot.

12 O rājā!
Having routed his enemy,
Ulūka now targeted
His sharp arrows
On the Pāñcāla and Sṛñjaya ranks.

13 Mahārāja!
Elsewhere on the field.
Your son Śrutakarman
In less time
Than half-an-eye-blink
Coolly
Deprived Śatānīka
Of his horses, chariot
And charioteer.

14 O respected one!
The mahā-chariot-hero Śatānīka
Refused to leave
His horscless chariot
And angrily flung
A mace at Śrutakarman.

15 Destroying horses, chariot
And charioteer, that mace,
O Bharata descendant,
Embedded itself in the earth.

16 Looking at each other
Fixedly,
The two unchärioted
Enhancers of Kaurava glory
Retreated from the battlefield.

17 Your perplexed son Śrutakarman
Climbed into the chariot
Of Vivitsu,
And Śatānīka
Ascended the chariot of Prativindhya.

18 Incensed Śakuni
Was unable to unnerve Sutasoma
Despire a volley
Of very sharp arrows,
Even as torrential rain
Fails to move a mountain.

19 O Bhārata descendant!
Confronted by Śakuni,
His father's bitter enemy,
Śutasoma shrouded him
With thousands of arrows.

20 Brilliant warrior,
Well-versed in all weapons,
Seeking victory,
Sakuni swiftly
Pulverised the arrows
Of Sutasoma
With his own shafts.

21 After disintegrating Sutasoma's arrows
With his own sharp shafts,
Śukuni targeted
And wounded Sutasoma
On the battlefield
With three shafts.

22 Mahārāja!
Your brother-in-law Śakuni
Annihilated
The horses and war-flag
And charioteer of Sutasoma
With his arrows.
All the soldiers shouted wildly.

23 O respected one!
Horses
Chariot
And war-flag destroyed,
Sutasoma leapt down
On the field
Brandishing his splendid bow.

24 Shooting gold-feathered
Stone-sharpened arrows,
He shrouded the chariot
Of your brother-in-law.

25 The mahā-chariot-hero son of Subala
Śakuni
Saw the arrow-swarms
Like locusts
Speeding towards him,
And, unruffled,

26 That mahā-renowned hero
Neutralised
The arrows of Sutasoma
With volleys of his own arrows.
The soldiers on the field
And the Siddhas in the sky
Marvelled

27 Seeing this wonderful,
Unbelievable feat –
Sutasoma on foot
Battling
Against Śakuni in his chariot.

28 With a volley of mahā-swift
Depressed-knot *bhalla*-arrows,
O rājā,
Śakuni destroyed the bow
And quivers and other weapons
Of Sutasoma.

29 Without his chariot
And now without his bow
Śutasoma raised high
A cat's-eye gem-encrusted sword
Dark-blue coloured
Like an *utpala*-lotus
With an ivory handle –
And roared his war-cry.

30 Śakuni saw Sutasoma
Brandish the sword
Blue like the sky
Looking like Kāla-daṇḍa
The rod of Cosmic Doom.

31 Mahārāja!
The brave and brilliant swordsman Sutasoma
Covered the battlefield
With maṇḍala-patterns
Of dexterous display
Of the fourteen kinds of sword-play.

32 *Bhrānta*-roaming
Udbhrānta-whirling
Āviddha-swinging
Āpluta-jumping
Vipluta-withdrawing
Sṛta-running
Sampāta-rushing
Samudīrṇa-hurling –
These were some
Of the sword-feats
Demonstrated by Sutasoma.

33 The excellingly heroic son of Subala –
Śakuni –
Targeted Sutasoma
With countless arrows
Which were all neutralised
By his magnificent sword.

34 Mahārāja!
Infuriated by the sight
Of his disintegrated arrows,
Subala's heroic son Śakuni released
A volley of snake-venomous arrows
At Sutasoma.

35 Valiant as Tārkṣya-Garuḍa,
Dexterows in sword-play,
Learned and strong,
Sutasoma disintegrated
The snake-venomous arrows as well.

36 O rājā!
But even as Sutasoma
Wove skilful maṇḍala-patterns
Of swordsmanship
On the battlefield,
Śakuni sliced his sword in two
With razor-sharp arrows.

37 That mahā-sword
Cut in two
Clanged on the field.
O Bharata descendant!
The hilt remained
In Sutasoma's hand.

38 Clutching
The hilt-half,
The mahā-chariot-hero
Sutasoma
Took six long leaps
And attacked
Śakuni with it.

39 The severed bow's hilt
Half-gold-filigreed
And gem-studded
Sliced
The bow
And bow-string
Of mahā-ātmaned Śakuni
And the pieces
Fell on the ground.

40 Sutasoma
Swiftly
Climbed
Into the mahā-chariot
Of Śrutakīrti.
In the meantime
Subala's son Śakuni
Readied a fierce
Near-invincible bow

41 And proceeded
To attack the Pāṇḍavas,
Killing many enemies on the way.
O lord of the earth!
A mahā-uproar
Broke in the ranks
Of the Pāṇḍavas

42 When they saw
Subala's son Śakuni
Fearlessly
Roaming the battlefield.
The mahā-proud well-equipped Pāṇḍava ranks

43 Were routed
By Subala's mahā-ātmaned son Śakuni.
O rājā! Subala's son
Devastated the Pāṇḍava ranks
Like the rājā of the gods Indra
Ravaging the Daitya anti-gods.

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 O rājā
(continued Sañjaya),
Kṛpa blocked the advance of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Like the fabled eight-legged
Beast called *śarabha*
Blocking a lion in a forest

2 O Bharata descendant!
Checked by Gotama's son Kṛpa,
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Could not move a step ahead.

3 Seeing the chariot
Of Gotama's son Kṛpa
Blocking the chariot
Of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
All on the field were terrified
And considered Dhṛṣṭadyumna
As already dead.

4 The chariot-heroes and horsemen
Said among themselves:
"The killing of Droṇa
Must have infuriated
The best of two-legged heroes –

5 Śaradvata's son Kṛpa –
Who is mahā-energetic
And well-versed in all divine weapons.
Can Dhṛṣṭadyumna escape
The wrath of Gotama's son?

6 Can this army escape
From this mahā-fear?
Are we all
Going to perish
At the hands of this Brahmin?

7 Gotama's son Kṛpa
Looms before us
Like Antaka
The End of all creatures.
He will follow
In the footsteps
Of Bharadvāja's son
Droṇa.

8 Ācārya Kṛpa
Is skilful-fingered,
Always victorious,
Well-versed-in-war-weapons,
Brimming with bravery,
Motivated by anger.

9 Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Seems not to want to fight
The mahā-battle."
These and similar comments
Could be heard
From your soldiers,

10 O mahārāja,
And by those
On the other side
When Dhṛṣṭadyumna
And Kṛpa confronted
Each other.
O king!
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,
Breathing heavily,

11 Struck the vital parts
Of Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Wounded by the mahā-ātmaned son of Gotama
On the battlefield,

[VIII:26:12-17]

Transcreated by P. Lal

12 Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Did not know what to do,
So mahā-confused was he.
His charioteer
Tturned to him, saying:
"O son of Pṛṣata!
Are you feeling well?

13 I have never seen you
So confused in battle.
The gods favoured you –
Their *daivayoga* stopped arrows
From piercing your vital parts

14 Whenever the finest
Of the twice-born Kṛpa
Targeted them.
I will swerve back
The chariot like a giant
Swerving a river from the ocean

15 It seems to me
This Brahmin cannot be killed.
He has drained you
Of your valour."
O rājā! Hearing this,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna said slowly:

16 "Charioteer!
My mind is so confused.
I am perspiring all over.
I am trembling.
I am horripilating.

17 Turn the chariot back
From the Brahmin
Drive me slowly
To where Arjuna is.
When I find Arjuna or Bhīma,
O charioteer,

18 I will feel safe.
Not till then.
I am sure of this."
Mahārāja!
Urging the horses,
The charioteer

19 Drove to where
The brilliant bowman Bhīma
Was battling
With your warriors.
O respected one!
Seeing the chariot
Of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Retreating,

20 Gotama's son Kṛpa
Gave chase,
Shooting hundreds of arrows.
Foe-annihilating Kṛpa
Blew repeatedly
On his conch.

21 Like Mahendra-Indra
Terrorising
The anti-god Namuci,
He terrorised
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
In another part
Of the field,
Difficult-to-defeat Śikhaṇḍin,
The slayer of Bhīṣma,

22 Found his advance
Blocked by a smiling Kṛtavarman,
The son of Hṛdīka.
Confronted
By the mahā-chariot-hero Kṛtavarman,
Śikhaṇḍin,

23 Targeted his collar-bone
With five *bhalla*-arrows.
Infuriated Kṛtavarman retaliated
With sixty feathered arrows

24 And then, O rājā,
Smiling,
The mahā-chariot-hero Kṛtavarman
Sliced Śikhaṇḍin's bow
With a single shaft.
Readying another bow,
Drupada's powerful son

25 Angrily shouted
To Hṛdīka's son Kṛtavarman:
"Stop! Don't move!"
Shooting ninety fierce
Gold-feathered arrows,

26 O Indra-among-rājās,
He failed to pierce
The armour of Kṛtavarman.
They glided off
And fell
On the ground.

27 Seeing this,
Śikhaṇḍin splintered
The bow of Kṛtavarman
With razor-headed arrows.
His bow shattered,
Kṛtavarman was as helpless
As a bull without horns.

28 Enraged Śikhaṇḍin
Pressed his advantage
By targeting eighty arrows
On his arms and chest.
Wounded by those arrows,
Kṛtavarman flamed with anger.

29 Blood gushed
From his limbs
Like water pouring
From the mouth of a jar.
With blood streaming
From his body, Kṛtavarman

30 Looked like
A red chalk cliff
Streaming crimson liquid
After a heavy downpour.
O rājā!
Readying another
Powerful bow,

31 And nocking it,
Kṛtavarman wounded
Śikhaṇḍin's shoulders
With a volley of arrows.
With the arrows
Sticking in his shoulders,
Śikhaṇḍin looked resplendent

32 Like a mahā-tree
With its wealth
Of branches and twigs.
So blood-drenched were
The two heroes, it seemed
They had bathed in a sea of blood.

33 They looked
Like two bulls
Who had gored each other
In a bloody duel.
Obsessed with the desire
To kill each other,
The two mahā-chariot-heroes

34 Manoeuvred their chariots
On the battlefield
In hundreds
Of maṇḍala-patterns
Mahārāja!
Kṛtavarman attacked
Pṛṣata's son Śikhaṇḍin

35 With stone-sharpened
Gold-feathered arrows –
Seventy of them –
Seriously
Wounding him
On the battlefield.

36 Most-excellent-of-heroes
Kṛtavarman
With great precision
And dedication
Shot a fierce
Life-devouring arrow
At Śikhaṇḍin
Who, O rājā,
Struck by it,
Fainted.

37 As he fell,
He clutched for support
At the flag-pole.
His charioteer drove
Him away from the field.

38 Pierced by Kṛtavarman's arrow,
He kept panting.
Prabhu! Lord!
With Drupada's son
Defeated, the harassed Pāṇḍavas
Fled the field.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Mahārāja!
(continued Sañjaya),
White-horsed Arjuna
Was devastating your ranks
Like a storm scattering
Pieces of cotton-wool.

2 To counter him
Came the Trigartas
Śibis
The Kaurava-assisted Śālvas
The Saṁśaptakas
The Nārāyaṇī army

3 And also, O Bharata,
The Satyasenas
Candradevas
Mitradevas and Śrutaṁjayas
Sanśrutis and Citrasenas
And Mitravarmas.

4 Reinforced on all sides
By these seven brothers
And by his sons
Who were all brilliant bowmen
And versed-in-all-war-weapons
Came the Trigarta rājā Suśarmarn.

5 Like streams rushing to the ocean
Those heroes rushed at Arjuna
Deluging him with showers of arrows.

6 But like snakes
Who lose their lives
Devoured by Tārkṣya-Garuḍa,
These hundreds of thousands
Of heroes met their doom
At the hands of Arjuna.

7 Mahārāja!
Fatally attracted
To the Pāṇḍava Arjuna
Were these warriors on the battlefield,
Like insects
Fatally fascinated by a flame.

8 Satyasena targeted
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
with three arrows
Mitradeva
with sixty-three
Candradeva
with seven

9 Mitravarman with seventy-three
Sausruti with seven
Śrutaṁjaya with twenty
And Suśarman
with nine.

10 Attacked
By all these kings
Arjuna retaliated
By targeting Sauśruti
with seven arrows
And Satyasena
with three

11 Śrutaṁjaya
with twenty
Candradeva
with eight
Mitradeva
with a hundred
Śrutasena
with three

12 Mitravarman with nine
Suśarman with eight.
Killing Śrutamjaya
With arrows sharpened on stone,

13 Arjuna decapitated Sanśruti
Complete with head-gear
And swiftly despatched Candradeva
With a volley of arrows
To the abode of Yama
The god of death.

14 Mahārāja!
With five arrows each
He repulsed
The other mahā-chariot-heroes
Who were bent
On victory in battle.

15 Infuriated Satyasena
Roaring like a lion
On the battlefield
Attacked Krishna
With a magnificent *tomara*-javelin.

16 Piercing the left arm
Of mahā-ātmaned Mādhava-Krishna,
The gold-ornamented steel javelin
Slid into the earth.

17 O lord of the earth!
In that mahā-clash
The whip and reins
Slipped
From the hand
Of Mādhava-Krishna
And fell
On the field.

18 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
Dhananjaya-Arjuna
Witnessed the prediacament
Of Vāsudeva-Krishna
And burning with anger
He said to Krishna:

19 "*Prabhu*! Lord!
Mahā-muscled one!
Drive the horses to Satyasena!
Let me despatch him
To the realm of Yama!"

20 Taking another whip
And picking up the reins,
Krishna drove the chariot
To face the chariot of Satyasena.

21 Seeing the injury
To Viṣvak-sena-Krishna
Everywhere-powerful Krishna,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna –
The mahā-chariot-hero –
Blocked Satyasena
With sharp arrows.

22 With sharp *bhalla*-arrows,
In the middle
Of the battlefield,
He sliced the ear-ringed
And ornamented head
Of the rājā
From his trunk.

23 O respected one!
After severing the head of Satyasena,
He killed Mitravarman
With sharp arrows
And Mitravarman's charioteer
With a sharp calf-toothed arrow.

24 Powerful Arjuna,
Flaming with anger,
Slew hundreds of thousands
Of Saṁśaptakas with
Thousands of arrows.

25 Then the mahā-chariot-hero Arjuna
Sliced the head
Of mahā-ātmaned Mitradeva
With a silver-feathered
Razor-headed arrow.

26 After which, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
In a burst of anger
Grievously wounded
Susarman's callar-bone.
All the ranks of the Saṁśaptakas

27 Deafened the ten directions
With their war-cries
And angrily
Surrounded Arjuna.
Thus hemmed in,
Equal-in-valour-to-Indra
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,

28 The mahā-chariot-hero
Materialised the Aindra-missile
With the incalculable power
Of his ātman-confidence.
O respected one!
Thousands of arrows
Streamed from it.

29 O lord of the world!
Shredded war-flags
Splintered bows
Chariots with pennants
Quivers
Yokes

30 *Akṣa*-axles
Wheels
Yoktra-halters
Along with ropes
And *raśmi*-cords

31 *Kūbara*-poles
Varūtha-fenders
Pṛṣat-arrows
Toppled horses
Prāsa-barbed darts
Ṛṣṭi-swords
Maces
Parigha-spiked iron clubs
Śakti-spears
Tomara-javelins
Pattiṣa-pointed spears

32 *Śataghni*-firearms on wheels
Arms
Thighs
Neck-threads
Kaṇtha-sūtras
Aṅgada-armlets
As well as *keyura*-bracelets
O respected one!

33 *Hāra*-necklaces
Niṣka-gold coins
Tanutra-armour
O Bhārata-descendant!
Umbrellas
Vyajana-palmleaf fans
Heads with diadems –

34 O lord of the earth!
What a mahā-noise was heard
Of the battlefield!
They lay on the ground –
Lovely-eyed faces like the full moon –

35 So many scattered heads
Scintillating like stars in the sky.
Lovely-garlanded
And lovely-robed
And sndalpaste-anointed

36 Bodies of slain warriors
Lay sprawled
On the battlefield.
An awesome sight –
As awesome as
The city of the Gandharvas –

37 That speectacle
Of the corpses
Of the sons of rājās
And maha-powerful Kṣatriyas.
The corpses
Of elephants and horses
Littering the field

38 Like shattered mountains
Made the field impassable.
It was not possible
For the wheels
Of the chariot of mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
To manoeuvre

39 So that
He could fire *bhalla*-arrows
At the elephants and horses
Of his enemies.
O respected one!
The chariot-wheels of Arjuna
Were fearfully mired and stuck

40 In the bloody slush
That swamped the battlefield.
The bogged wheels
Were so enmeshed

41 That even
Mind-swift and wind-swift horses
Could not pull them
Out of the mire,
No matter how hard they struggled.

42 Devastated
By Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna,
Your army,
O Bharata descendant,
Fled.
It did not wait
Even an instant.

43 Having routed
The Saṁśaptakas,
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
Dazzled on the field
Like a smokeless flame.

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya),
It was left to Duryodhana
To fearlessly face
Arrow-showeing Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Swiftly wounding your son,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira challenged
Your maha-chariot-hero son
Rājā ?Duryodhana:
"Wail! Don't move!"

3 This so infuiriated Duryodhana
That he retaliated
With nine sharp arrows,
And wounded
Yudhiṣṭhira's charioteer
With a *bhalla*-shaft.

4 O rājā!
Yudhiṣṭhira attacked Duryodhana
With thirteen stone-sharpened
Gold-feathered arrows.

5 With four of those arrows
Mahā-chariot-hero Yudhiṣṭhira killed
Duryodhana's four horses, with a fifth
He beheaded his charioteer.

6 With the sixth
He shredded
Duryodhana's war-flag,
With the seventh
Splintered his bow,
With the eighth
Shattered his sword.

7 With the five remaining,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Grievously wounded the king.
Your son leapt
From the horseless chariot

8 In that moment of supreme crisis
And stood his ground.
Seeing him vulnerable
On the field,
Karṇa
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Kṛpa and others

9 Swiftly rushed
To the rescue
Of ruler-of-men Duryodhana.
All the other sons of Pāṇḍu
Surrounded Yudhiṣṭhira,

10 O rājā,
And a fearful battle
Took place.
In that mahā-clash
Rose the noise
Of thousands of musical instruments.

11 O lord of the earth!
What a *kilakila*-cacophony
Reverberated
On the field!
The Pāñcāla
And the Kaurava ranks
Collided:

12 Men against men
Elephants against elephants
Chariots against chariots
Horses against horses.

13 Mahārāja!
Such incredible
Splendid duels
Took place between
Excellently armed combatants!

14 Those mahā-energetic warriors
Who had vowed
To kill or be killed
Fought
Swiftly and exquisitely.

15 Having taken
The vow of a warrior,
They slew each other.
In that battle
Not a single warrior
Turned his back.

16 O rājā!
It was only for a moment
That the clash
Looked marvellous.
Soon it became a scene
Of senseless
Limitless
Madness.

17 Chariot-heroes
Confronted
Elephant-warriors
And
With sharp
Knotted arrows
Despatched them
To the abode
Of Kāla
Time the All-killer.

18 Elephants
Rushed against horses
And hurled them
On the ground
After multilating them.
A grisly spectacle!

19 Charging horses
Surrounded
The excellent elephant ranks
And the horse-riders
Clapped noisily
Creating a commotion.

20 When the terrified
Mahā-elephants
Fled
In confusion,
The horsemen assailed
Them with arrows
From the back
And from the sides.

21 O rājā!
So many elephants also,
Infuriated,
Attacked the horses,
Gored them
And trampled them to pulp.

22 Still other elephants
Gored horses and riders,
And other massive elephants
Swung the horses high
With their trunks
And flung then fiercely
On the field.

23 Even the foot-soldiers
Surrounded
And grievously wounded
The elephants
Who scattered
Trumpeting in agony
In the ten directions.

24 Flinging away
Their ornaments,
Many foot-soldiers
Fled in panic.
Thinking those
Flying ornaments

25 To be weapons
Hurled against them,
The mahā-elephants
Lifted them
With their trunks
And crunched them
With theirs tusks.

26 Encircling
These confused elephants
And their riders,
The mahā-energetic,
Brave foot-soldiers
Succeeded
In killing them.

27 So many foot-soldiers
Tossed in the sky
By elephant's trunks
In that mahā-clash!
And as they fell,
All them trampled
By those brilliantly trained elephants!

28 So many foot-soldiers
Trapped in the coils
Of elephant-trunks
And slaughtered!
So many mahā-elephants
Breaking through the ranks
Of the enemy

29 And seizing enemy soldiers
And trampling and pulping them
Or turning them
Into balls of lumpy flesh!

30 O lord of the earth!
The foot-soldiers
Who moved in front
Of the elephants
Attacked and wounded
The elephants of the enemy ranks.

31 Some foot-soldiers
Targeted the cheeks
And temples and the part
Between the tusks
With *prāsa*-barbed darts
Tomara-javelins
And *śakti*-spears
With gory results.

32 Other elephants were toppled
By fierce attacks from both sides
By chariot-heroes and horse-riders.

33 In that mahā-clash
So many foot-soldiers
Armed with shields
Were cut down
By the *tomara*-javelins
Of elephant-warriors
And crushed!

34 O respectworthy one!
Lord of the earth!
So many elephants
Surrounded chariots
And dragged the occupants
From the vehicles

35 And flung them afar –
A fearful,
A gruesome sight!
And those mahā-powerful elephants also,
Pierced with *nārāca*-arrows,

36 Toppling on the field
Like mountain-peaks
Shattered by thunderbolts!
And what fist-fights
Between combatants!

37 Pulling each other
By their hair-tufts,
Pummelling each other,
Mutilating each other!
Hands raised high,
Brought crashing down
On the foe!

38 Feet pressed on struggling chests,
And heads sliced!
O rājā!
A head cut off
Of a falling foe!

39 A sword thrust
Into the body
Of a living foe!
O Bharata-descendent!
A battle of blows
Between the two foes!

40 A battle of tugged
And ripped hair-tufts!
A battle of bodies
Grappling and wrestling!
A battle in which
Soldiers killed soldiers
Who were fighting others,

41 And the soldiers
Who died did not know
Who and what weapons killed them.
And so, while the soldiers
Fought in these ways,

42 Hundreds and thousands
Of headless bodies
Stood erect on the field
In blood-drenched uniforms
And blood-dripping armour,

43 Looking like so many
Mahā-crimson pieces of cloth
Red-dyed and drying.
O rājā!
Mutilated by arrows,
It was not possible
To tell foe from friend.

44 They died fighting,
Obsessed by will to win,
Making fighting their sole duty.
Mahārāja!
They killed friend and foe.

45 They were lost
In a welter
Of senseless slaughter.
Mahārāja!
Fellow-soldier killed
Companion from
The same ranks.

46 Such
Was the confusion
In both armies.
Mahārāja!
Shattered chariots
Toppled elephants

47 Slaughtered horses
Butchered bodies
Of foot-soldiers –
It seemed
In no time at all
The world had become
An impassable swamp.

48 O lord of the earth!
In no time at all
A river of blood started
Flowing on the field,
With Karṇa killing
The Pāñcālas,
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
The Trigartas,

49 Bhīma the Kauravas
And your elephant-ranks.
Such was the carnage
Among the Kauravas
And the Pāṇḍavas,
Both seeking fame
On that afternoon.

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 "Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"I have heard
Such gruesome and grief-giving
Stories from you, including
The deaths of my sons.

2 O charioteer!
From what you have told me
About the progress
Of the battle, I am certain
That no Kaurava is still alive.

3 Even the mahā-chariot-hero Duryodhana
Was unchariated.
Tell me:
How did Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Battle with Duryodhana,
And how did he retaliate?

4 What happened
In that horripilating clash
In the afternoon?
Sañjaya,
Give me all the details.
You are a splendid reporter:"

5 Lord of the earth!
(replied Sañjaya)
While the two armies were locked
In confused skirmishes,
Your son Duryodhana,
Riding another chariot,

6 Brimming with anger,
Looking like a venomous snake.
His anger-inflamed eyes
Surveyed all the soldiers
On the battlefield.

7 Seeing Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira –
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira –
Standing mid-field,
Blazing with glory
Like thunderbolt-wielding Indra,
Duryodhana
Targeted
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

8 And said to his charioteer:
"Quick!
Charioteer!
Take me
Where Pāṇḍu's son
Yudhiṣṭhira is.

9 Take me where
The rājā is,
Clad in armour,
Resplendent under
His royal umbrella."
Ordered
By rājā Duryodhana,
The charioteer
Drove the splendid chariot

10 To confront
Yudhiṣṭhira
On the battlefield.
Like an enraged elephant,
Yudhiṣṭhira

11 Ordered his charioteer:
"Take me to face
Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
Cousin-brothers
Valiant heroes
Unparalleled chariot-warriors

12 Mahā-heroes
Difficult-to-defeat-in-battle
The two
Faced each other –
Both brilliant bowmen –
Mahā-archers
Showering torrents of arrows.

13 O respectworthy one!
With a stone-sharpened *bhalla*-arrow
Rājā Duryodhana
Sliced the bow
Of noble dharmaśīla Yudhiṣṭhira.

14 Unable to endure that insult,
Yudhiṣṭhira's anger broke bounds.
Eyes red
With wrath,
He flung aside
His shattered bow,

15 And quickly
Made ready another.
Standing at the head of his army,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
Sliced Duryodhana's bow
And war-flag.

16 Nocking and firing another bow,
Duryodhana wounded Yudhiṣṭhira.
The infuriated warriors
Deluged each other
With showers of weapons.

17 Each determined
To rout the other,
They fought
Like two lions,
Like two
Snorting bulls.

18 Both mahā-chariot-heroes,
O mahārāja,
Glowed with the glory
Of two flowering *kiṁśuka*
Flames-of-theforest.
O rājā! Repeatedly
Roaring their lion-cries,

19 Thumping their arm-pits,
Twanging their bows,
The two lords-of-men
Blew fiercely
On their conches
In that fearful battle.

20 Mahārāja!
They sorely afflicted each other.
Your son Duryodhana was assailed
With three arrows
By rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

21 In a fit of anger –
Three arrows
Difficult to deflect
That sped with the ferocity
Of a thunderbolt.
Your earth-ruling son retaliated

22 With five gold-feathered,
Stone-sharpened arrows.
O Bharata-descendant!
Rājā Duryodhana hurled
A śakti-spear

23 Made entirely of steel,
Extremely sharp,
Looking like a mahā-meteor.
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Sliced that speeding weapon
With arrows –

24 With three arrows –
And with five more he wounded his antagonist.
The golden-staffed weapon fell
With a mahā-noise,

25 Shattering on the field
Like a mahā-meteor,
A mass
Of blazing splendour.
O lord of the earth!
When your son
Saw the śakti-spear
Fragmented,

26 He targeted Yudhiṣṭhira
With nine sharp *Bhalla*-arrows.
Wounded by his strong foe,
Foe-tormenting Yudhiṣṭhira,

27 Mahā-powerful Yudhiṣṭhira,
Nocked an arrow
In the centre of his bow
And aimed it at Duryodhana.

28 Mahārāja!
Brilliant-in-valour Yudhiṣṭhira
Angrily
Shot the arrow.
Your mahā-chariot-hero son
Duryodhana,

29 Struck by the arrow,
Became unconscious.
Piercing the rājā,
It slid into the earth.
Roused
To fierce anger
Duryodhana
Swiftly whirled
His massive mace,

30 And, determined
To end all hostilities
Once and for ever,
Attacked Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Seeing the mace raised high
Like the rod of Antaka
The god of doom,

31 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Prepared to retaliate
With a mahā-śakti
Of mahā-velocity
Which blazed
Like a mahā-meteor.

32 Piercing the armour
Of chariot-seated Duryodhana,
The śakti stuck in his chest.
Agonising, he collapsed,
Unconscious.

33 Recalling his vow,
Bhīma said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"O king!
You must not kill him."
Yudhiṣṭhira refrained
From killing Duryodhana.

34 Kṛtavarman swiftly sped
To rescue your son
Rājā Duryodhana
From the ocean
Of disaster.

35 Wielding his gold-filigreed mace,
Bhīma
Rushed
Across the field
To intercept
Kṛtavarman.

36 Mahārāja!
This was the clash that took place
That afternoon
Between your forces and their foes,
Both seeking victory.

SECTION THIRTY

1 Stationing Karṇa at their head
(continued Sañjaya),
Your soldiers –
All difficult-to-defeat –
Returned to the field,
And a battle raged
That resembled
The clash between
The gods and anti-gods.

2 Elephants
Men
Chariots
Horses
And elephant-warriors
Chariot-heroes
Foot-soldiers
Horsemen
Roused by pealing conches
And heavily armed
Overflowing with anger
Clashed in mutual slaughter.

3 In that mahā-clash
Brave warriors
With hatchets and swords
And spears and arrows
Decimated elephant-warriors
And chariot-horses and horsemen
Along with their vehicles.

4 An awesome spectacle!
The earth littered
With severed heads
Lotus-lovely
Sun-splendid
Moon-radiant
White teeth shining
Faces and eyes and noses
    shining
Diadem-decked
Glittering ear-ringed!

5 A river of blood
    flowing
With thousands of elephants
And humans and horses killed
With *parigha*-spiked iron clubs
Maces and śakti-spears
Tomara-lances and *gada*-clubs
Nakhara-curved knives
And *bhuśuṇḍi*-firearms.

6 Chariots
Men
Horses
Elephants
Destroyed and mutilated
By their foes
Littered the field like the population
Of the kingdom of *pitṛ-pati* Yama
The lord of the spirits
Of departed ancestors.

7 Naradeva! O god among men!
Your soldiers and your sons –
The bull-brave Kaurava heroes –
Like the sons of gods –
With immeasurable strength
Attacked Śini's grandson Sātyaki.

8 A magnificent spectacle!
Soldiers
Incomparable horses
And chariots
And elephants
Filled with fearful fervour
Roaring fiercely
Like the massive salty ocean
Resembling the armies
Of the anti-gods
And the immortal gods.

9 Karṇa the son
Of Ravi the Sun –
Illustrious like Surapati
Lord-of-gods Indra –
Attacked Śini's grandson
Who resembled the younger brother
Of 33-lord Indra
(12 Ādityas, 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras, 2 Aśvins)
With sun-bright arrows.

10 The bull-brave Śini hero Sātyaki
With unmatchable skill
Fired countless snake-venomous arrows
That shrouded
The finest-of-heroes Karṇa
And his chariot
And horses and charioteer.

11 Seeing the bull-brave chariot-hero
Vasuṣena-Karṇa
Afflicted by the arrows
Of the bull-brave
Sini hero Sātyaki,
Your chariot-hero allies
Swiftly rushed to his aid
With elephants and chariots
And horses and foot-soldiers.

12 Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna and others
Speedily attacked your ocean-vast army,
And your army also
Retaliated against the enemy forces.
A mahā-carnage ensued
Of men and chariots
And horses and elephants.

13 After performing
The afternoon pūjā rituals as ordained
To Prabhu Bhava-Śiva,
Arjuna and Keśava-Krishna,
Determined to kill their enemies,
Marched resolutely against your army.

14 The rattle of their chariot
Was like the roaring of clouds,
The flags of their chariot
Fluttered freely in the breeze,
Their chariot was pulled
By pure-white horses.
As it sped towards them,
The Kauravas lost heart.

15 As if dancing in the chariot,
Arjuna fired arrows
From his Gāṇḍīva
That filled
The sky
The directions
And the sub-directions.

16 Like the wind
Scattering clouds,
Arjuna with his arrows
Disintegrated
The beflagged
Well-equipped
Charioteer-piloted
Swift-flying chariot-vehicles.

17 With his sharp arrows
He despatched
War-flags and pennants
And war-weapons
And elephants and their riders
And horses and their riders
And foot-soldiers
To the realm of Yama.

18 It was left to Duryodhana to challenge
The enraged mahā- chariot-hero
Arjuna shooting-shafts
Like Antaka the god of doom.

19 When seven arrows
Arjuna destroyed
Duryodhana's bow
Charioteer
Horses
And war-flag
And with one more
Shredded his umbrella.

20 With a ninth life-threatening shaft
He targeted Duryodhana;
But Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Splintered that shaft
Into seven fragments.

21 Shattering the bow
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
Splintered the formidable bow of Kṛpa
With his arrows.

22 Next he shattered the bow
Of Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman,
Shredded his war-flag
And killed his charioteer.
Next he targeted
And splintered
The bow of Duḥśāsana
Before rushing to attack
Rādhā's son Karṇa.

23 Disengaging himself from Sātyaki,
Karṇa targeted Arjuna
With three arrows.
Wounding Krishna
With twenty arrows
He kept targeting
Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna
Again and again.

24 Flaming with anger
And resembling Śatakratu-Indra
"Performer-of-a-hundred-sacrifices",
Karṇa afflicted his foes
With countless arrows,
Never once tiring
In his relentless onslaught.

25 Sātyaki retaliated with sharp arrows,
Following them with
One hundred and ninety-nine
More terrifying shafts.

26 The brilliant warriors
In the army of the sons
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī
Relentlessly attacked Karṇa.
Yudhāmanyu and Śikhaṇḍin
And the Prabhadrakas
The five sons of Draupadī

27 Uttamaujas
Yuyutsu
The twins Nakula and Sahadeva
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
The Cedis
Kārūsas
Matsyas
Kekayas

28 Powerful Cekitāna
Virtuous-vowed Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
– Valiant warriors all,
Supported by chariots,
Elephants and horses
And foot-soldiers –

29 Encircled Karṇa and showered him
With varied war-weapons,
Having vowed with fearful words
To kill Karṇa.

30 Like a storm shattering a tree
Karṇa
With his sharp arrows
Shattered into fragments
The arrow-showers of his foes.

31 Incensed Karṇa
Could be seen on the battlefield
Slaughtering the mahā-divisions
Of chariot-heroes
Elephant-riders and horsemen
And foot-soldiers.

32 Victims of the weapons of valiant Karṇa,
Unweaponed
Un-vehicled
Undone
The Pāṇḍava forces
Near-panicked and fled.

33 Smiling,
Arjuna matched Karṇa
Weapon for weapon,
And with a counter-shower
Shrouded sky and earth
And the different directions
With volleys of arrows.

34 Some of his arrows
Dropped on the earth like clubs,
Some like *parigha* spiked maces
Some like *śataghni* firearms
And still others
Like fearful thunderbolts.

35 Mutilated by those arrows
The Kaurava soldiers,
Horses, chariots, and elephants
Sped blindly across the field,
Screeching and screaming.

36 In that battle
Men and horses and elephants
Attained *niṣ-kaivalya*
Pure and absolute extinction
Many, arrow-mutilated,
Fled
In terror.

37 And even as your soldiers
Battled,
Flushed with desire to win,
The sun set in the hills.

38 Mahārāja!
Such was the dust-driven dense darkness
That nothing
Auspicious or inauspicious
Could be seen
On the battlefield.

39 O Bharata descendant!
All the brilliant mahā-bowmen,
Afraid and unwilling
To battle in the pitch dark,
Retreated to their camps
With their accompanying soldiers.

40 O rājā!
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons also,
At the end of day,
Delighted at the sight
Of the Kauravas' retreat,
Retired to their camps,

41 Praising the feats
Of Acyuta-Krishna and Arjuna,
And mocking their foes
With lion-roars and shouts
And cacophonous drum-beats of victory.

42 After the defeat of the Kauravas
By the heroic warriors,
All the soldiers and lords-of-men
Offered blessings and benedictions
To the Pāṇḍavas.

43 With the retreat
Of the enemy forces,
The Pāṇḍava soldiers
And lords-of-men
Passed the night happily
In their camps.

44 Night-ranging Rākṣasas
And blood-sucking Piśācas
And hordes
Of carnivorous beasts
Descended on that fearful field,
The playground of Rudra-Śiva.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 “Arjuna slaughtered my soldiers,”
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
“Because he wanted to.
Even Antaka the goal of doom
Cannot escape
A battle-ready Arjuna.

2 Singlehanded, Pārtha-Arjuna
Carried-away Bhadrā-Subhadrā.
Singlehanded, he gratified
The god of fire Agni.
Conquering the earth singlehanded
He made kings pay tribute.

3 With his divine bow
Alone
He slaughtered the Nivātakavacas
And disguised as a Kirāta
Fought against Śarva-Śiva.

4 Alone
He protected the Bharata race.
Alone
He gratified Bhava-Siva.
Alone
He defeated
The rulers of the earth
For his power
And his valour
Are fierce.

5 Instead of blaming,
Praise my soldiers
Tell me, O charioteer,
Everything they did.
And tell me:
What did Duryodhana do
After retiring to his tent?”

6 Wounded by arrows
(continued Sañjaya)
Limbs mutilated
Deprived of vehicles
Armour and weapons destroyed
Voices hushed
Defeated-by-enemies
The Kaurava soldiers
Wallowed
In the misery
Of humiliation.

7 Sitting in their tents
They involved themselves
In endless discussions.
Their state was like that
Of trampled snakes
Whose fangs have been broken
And venom removed.

8 Rubbing his hands,
Sighing like a snake,
Wrath-filled Karṇa
Looked at your son
And said:

9 "Arjuna is
Alert
Firm
Clever
And persevering.
And Adhokṣaja-Krishna is always there
To prompt him at the right time.

10 Today he tricked us
With his weapons-shower,
But tomorrow,
O lord of the earth,
I will frustrate
Every move of his."

11 Duryodhana said,
"So be it,"
And ordered
The excellent assembled kings
To retire.
They returned to their camps.

12 They passed the night
Happily. Eagerly
They readied for battle.
They saw the difficult-to-defeat army formation
Which Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

13 Had organised
Following the strategy
Advised by Bṛhaspati
And Uśanas-Śukra.
So daring-deed-doer
Enemy-annihilator
Brilliantly heroic

14 Bull-shouldered Karṇa
Was inducted by Duryodhana
On the battlefield.
Like Puraṁdara-Indra
In the art of war,
Like the Maruts
In physical strength,

15 Like Kārtavīrya-Arjuna in valour –
Was Karṇa
On whom rājā Duryodhana
Focused his hopes.
In their hours of deepest crisis,
Men turn to their friends for help;
So all the soldiers
Turned to the charioteer's son
The brilliant bowman Karṇa.

16 "O charioteer!"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"What did Duryodhana do next? Fools!
Why did all of you
Turn to Vaikartana-Karṇa?

17 Did you turn
To Rādhā's son Karṇa
Like chill-afflicted mortals
To the radiant sun?
After their retreat,
When my warriors
Returned to the field,

18 Tell me, Sañjaya,
How did Vaikartana-Karṇa
Resume his battle,
And how did the Pāṇḍavas
Fight the charioteer's son?

19 'Mahā-muscled Karṇa
Singlehanded
Could have wiped out
Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
And the Sṛñjayas.
The valour of Karṇa's arms
Equals that of Viṣṇu
And Śakra-Indra.

20 Terrible are the weapons
Of this mahā-ātmaned hero,
And terrible also his prowess.' –
This must have turned
Rājā Duryodhana's head.

21 But what did the maha-chariot-hero Karṇa do
When he saw the Pāṇḍavas
Make Duryodhana their target
And display their prowess
On the battlefield?

22 Pinning his hopes
Of victory on Karṇa,
Foolish Duryodhana
Attacked the sons
Of Pṛthā-Kuntī
And Keśava-Krishna as well.

23 Aho!
How mahā-sorrowful
That even the magnificently
Valiant Karṇa failed
To defeat Pāṇḍu's sons!
It's fate that decides everything

24 Aho!
The terrible consequences
Of that dice-game!
Aho!
That I have to hear
Of the painful suffering
Of Duryodhana's karma

25 That pierces me
Sañjaya
Like fearful thorns!
Tāta! Dear one!
Subala's son Śakuni
Was supposed to be
An expert on policy;

26 And so was Karṇa –
Which is why rājā Duryodhana
Depended on him.
When I hear what
Has been hapening
In this mahā-battle,

27 My sons defeated and slaughtered
I realise
There is no one who can repulse
The Pāṇḍavas on the field.

28 They push through
My army like
Pushing through
A crowd of women.
Fate is all-powerful."
O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
Think if you will now
Of the dice-game
And your dharma-behaviour at that time.

29 How does it help though
To brood on the past?
It's self-defeating,
Self-destructive.

30 What you did then
Was the worst way to achieve results.
You knew – yet you confused
To-be-done with not-to-be-done.

31 O rājā!
You were repeatedly warned by the Pāṇḍavas:
"Give up the idea of war."
Lord of the earth!
You were so deluded
You did not listen.

32 What gross misdeeds
You perpetrated on the Pāṇḍavas!
It's those deeds
That are responsible
For this slaughter
Of the earth's rulers.

33 O bull-brave Bharata!
That's all past now.
No use lamenting
Listen to the consequences –
The horrendous destruction on the battlefield.

34 Night passed.
Day dawned.
Mahā-muscled Karṇa
Went to rājā Duryodhana
And said:

35 "O rājā!
Today I shall fight
Pāṇḍu's famed son Arjuna.
Either I kill that hero
Or he kills me.

36 O Bharata rājā!
Too many things interfered
And prevented so far
A duel between me
And Pārtha-Arjuna.

37 O earth-ruling Bharata!
Listen to what I say,
For I speak in all seriousness:
I will not return today
Without killing Pārtha-Arjuna.

38 Our finest heroes
Have all been killed.
I will stand alone
On the battlefield.
Pārtha-Arjuna will attack me
Because he knows
I no longer possess
The śakti-missile
Of Śakra-Indra.

39 Lord of men!
Listen to what I say
For your welfare.
Both I and Arjuna
Possess celestial weapons.

40 O Bharata descendant!
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
Cannot equal me
In strength and valour
And weapons-skill
And *nimitta*-jñana-yoga improvisation.

41 In piercing
A mahā-bodied opponent,
In swift-shooting,
In distant-targeting,
In subtle manoeuvring,
In weapons-lore,
Ambiderterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
Is not my equal.

42 My bow is the Vijaya
The mahā-weapon of all weapons.
Viśvakarman himself
Fashioned this bow
To please Indra.

43 O rājā!
Hundred-sacrifices-receiving Śatakratu-Indra
Routed the Daityas with this.
Its twang bewildered the Daityas
About the ten directions.

44 Śakra-Indra gave
This incomparable bow
To Bhṛgu's son Paraśurāma,
And Bhārgava-Paraśurāma
Gave this celestial bow to me.

45 With this weapon
I will battle mahā-muscled Arjuna
The finest of victorious warriors
Like Indra battling
With all the Daityas
In the distant past.

[VIII:31:46-50]

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46 This fierce bow
Gifted by Paraśurāma
Excels even the Gāṇḍīva.
This is the same bow
With which Paraśurāma
Vanquished the earth
Twenty-one times.

47 Bhārgava-Paraśurāma
Personally recounted to me
The supernatural feats
Of this bow.
This is the bow
With which I will fight
Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.

48 Duryodhana!
Today I will delight
You and your family
And your friends and allies
By killing on the field
The incomparable warrior
Arjuna.

49 O lord of the earth!
With that hero dead,
Consider this mountain-
Forest-island-and-ocean-
Teeming earth to be yours,
Your sons' and your grandsons'.

50 Success is sure
For anyone
Devoted to dharma.
So success is sure
For me today
Because I am determined
To please you.

51 No tree can stand before fire.
No one can escape me in battle.
But let me say also
In what ways
I am less than Phālguna-Arjuna.

52 His bow-string is celestial.
He has two inexhaustible celestial quivers
His charioteer is Govinda-Krishna.
I do not have these.

53 His Gāṇḍīva-bow
Is the finest,
Celestial and invincible.
My bow Vijaya
Is mahā-celestial too
And incomparable.

54 O rājā!
So far as the bows are concerned,
I have an edge over Pārtha-Arjuna.
But exactly how
Heroic Pāṇḍava-Arjuna excels me,
Let me explain.

55 Dāśārha-Krishna,
Namaskāra-ed by all the worlds,
Holds his reins.
His golden chariot,
A celestial gift
From the fire-god Agni,

56 Is, O hero,
Indestructible.
His horses
Are swift as thought.
His celestial war-flag
Sports the *vānara* awe-inspiring
Tree-man symbol.

57 The Creator of the cosmos
Krishna
Is the protector of his chariot.
I do not have
Any of these advantages,
But I am determined
To fight Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

58 The glory-of-gatherings Salya
Resembles Śauri-Krishna.
If he does his duty
As my charioteer well,
Victory is sure to be yours.

59 So
Foe-irresistible Śalya
Will be my charioteer
And see to it that I am supplied
With cart-loads
Of vulture-feathered *nārāca*-arrows.

60 O Indra-among-rājās!
O bull-brave Bharata!
See that chariots
Pulled by excellent horses
Follow me at all times.

61 This will ensure
My superiority
Over Pārtha-Arjuna.
Śalya is better than Krishna,
And I am better than Arjuna.

62 Slayer-of-heroic-foes
Krishna of the Dāśārhas
Is an expert on horses;
But the mahā-chariot-hero Śalya
Is no less a master
Of equestrianship.

63 In strength of arms
None can equal
The Madra-rājā Śalya.
In bowcraft brilliance
None equals me.

64 Because none equals
Śalya in equestrianship,
With him as my charioteer
I will excel Arjuna.

65 Sitting in my chariot,
I will completely excel him.
Not doubt of it –
I will defeat Phālguna-Arjuna.

66 Even the gods
Led by Vāsava-Indra
Will be helpless
Against me.
O foe-oppressing mahārāja!
I would like you
To do this for me.

67 Fulfil this desire
Of mine.
Let no time be wasted
In its implementation.
This done, I will have
All the support
I need.

68 O Bharata-descendant!
You will see for yourself
What I do on the field.
I will defeat
All the Pāṇḍavas
Who are gathered there.

69 O rājā!
Even the gods
And anti-gods
Cannot face me.
The Pāṇḍavas are born
Of human yonis.
What more can I say?"

70 O rājā!
Your son Duryodhana
Heard these words
Of war-glorious Karṇa,
Joyfully offered him pūjā-respect,
And said
To Rādhā's son:

71 "Karṇa!
I will do
As you have advised.
Excellent horses will follow
Your chariot with supplies
Of arrow-loaded quivers.

72 Countless carts
Will keep resplenishing you
With vulture-feathered *nārāca*-arrows;
And the lords of the earth,
Karṇa, will be behind you."

73 Mahārāja!
Saying this,
Your illustrious son
Rājā Duryodhana went
To the Madra-rājā Śalya
To advise him.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 Mahārāja
(continued Sañjaya)
Your son Duryodhana
Humbly approached
The mahā-chariot-hero Śalya
And said affectionately:

2 "Mahā-fortunate one!
True-vowed one! Foe-punishing one!
Lord of Madra!
Battle-brave hero! O foe-terroriser!

3 O most eloquent speaker!
You have heard what Karṇa said –
Of all the lion-like kings
He chooses you.

4 O lord of the Madras!
O foe-destroying
Incomparably powerful hero!
With my head bowed low,
I beg of you –

5 For my welfare,
Become Karṇa's charioteer,
For you are the finest of charioteers,
And kill Pārtha-Arjuna.

6 With you as his charioteer,
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Will wipe out my enemies.
None but you deserves to hold his reins,

7 For you, O mahā-fortunate one,
Are the equal
Of Vasudeva-Krishna himself.
Protect Karṇa
In the same way as Brahmā
Protected Maheśvara-Śiva.

8 O lord of the Madras!
Protect Rādhā's son Karṇa
In the same way
As Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis
Always looks after
The welfare of the Pāṇḍavas.

9 Our army has
Bhīṣma and Droṇa
Kṛpa and Karṇa
You and I
The valiant Bhoja Kṛtavarman
Subala's son Śakuni
And Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

10 O lord of the earth!
That makes a total of nine divisioṇs –
But the divisions of Bhīṣma
And mahā-ātmaned Droṇa
Are no more with us.

11 They fought our enemies
Over and beyond the call of duty.
They were old, both
The mahā-magnificent bowmen,
And they were deceitfully
Killed by their enemies.

12 O defectless one!
They did their difficult duty
And attained heaven.
Similarly,
Many other lions-among-men
Were killed by our foes.

13 So many of our heroes
Fought to the extreme of their śakti,
Surrendered their *prāṇa,*
And from the battlefield
Went straight to heaven.

14 O lord of men!
Most of my army
Has already been wiped out.
A handful of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
Have done this.
What is there left to talk about?

15 O lord of the earth!
Find some way now to stop
The mahā-ātmaned, truly valiant sons of Kuntī
From finishing off what's left.

16 Illustrious lord!
The finest of my heroes
Have fallen victim to the Pāṇḍavas
On the battlefield.
Only mahā-muscled Karṇa
Is left, my dear friend
Who seeks my welfare.

17 O lion-among-men Śalya!
Another is you –
The finest mahā-chariot-hero
In all the worlds.
And Karṇa is eager to fight Arjuna.

18 Rājā of Madra! Lord of men!
He yearns to win,
But there is no one else
In the world deserving
To hold his reins.

19 Excellent Krishna holds the reins
Of Pārtha-Arjuna's chariot.
You should hold the reins
Of Karṇa's chariot.

20 Lord of the earth!
Linked to Krishna
And protected by Krishna,
Whatever Pārtha-Arjuna
Does on the battlefield
Has been observed by you.
You know his tactics.

21 Earlier, Arjuna never killed
His foes as he does now.
With Krishna helping him,
He has become bolder.

22 Lord of Madra! Every day,
With Krishna's help, you see
Pārtha-Arjuna spreading havoc
In the Dhṛtarāṣṭran ranks.

23 O mahā-resplendent one!
Left now is your division
And Karṇa's division.
Join forces with Karṇa –
And together
Destroy your enemies.

24 Like Aruṇa the Dawn
The charioteer of the Sun
Who assists the Sun
To scatter darkness,
Become Karṇa's charioteer
In this mahā-war
And kill Pārthā-Arjuna.

25 When they see
Karṇa and Śalya
Dawning like two suns
On the battlefield,
The mahā-chariot-heroes
Of our enemies
Will panic and flee.

26 O respect-worthy one!
Like the forces of darkness
Dying the instant they see
Sūrya and Aruṇa arriving,
Kuntī's sons
The Pāñcālas
And the Sṛñjayas
Will destruct when they see you both.

27 Karṇa excels all chariot-heroes,
And you excel all charioteers.
Such a duo never was
And never will be.

28 Like Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis
Always and everywhere
Protecting Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
Protect Vaikartana-Karṇa
On the battlefield.

29 O lord of the earth!
With you as his charioteer,
Even Śakra-Indra and all the gods
Cannot defeat Karṇa –
How can the Pāṇḍavas?
Do not doubt this."

30 Śalya heard Duryodhana.
Anger suffused him.
His brow furrowed with rage.
He waved his arms furiously
Again and again.

31 Mahā-powerful Śalya
Rolled his large eyes,
Proud of his lineage,
His wealth,
His learning,
His valour.

32 Śalya said:
"Son of Gāndhārī!
You insult me!
You don't trust me.
How can you coolly say,
'Be a charioteer'?

33 Are you implying
Karṇa is superior to me?
You over-praise him.
On the battlefield
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Just about equals me.

34 Lord of the earth!
Allow me
A larger role
On the field of battle.
I will rout him
On the battlefield,
And return
From where I came.

35 Or if you so like,
O descendant of Kuru,
Let me fight alone.
See my valour on the field
As I scorch
My enemies.

36 I will not go to battle
Carrying the burden
Of an insult.
Do not doubt me.

37 Do not question
My valour on the field.
Look at my two arms!
They are like thunderbolts!

38 Look at my bow,
Dazzling,
Multi-coloured!
And my arrows
Like venomous snakes!

39 And my chariot
Pulled by wind-swift horses!
And my mace too,
O son of Gāndhārī,
With gold-filigree work!
I can shatter the earth,
Disintegrate mountains.

40 O lord of the earth!
I can dry up the ocean.
O rājā!
Now that you know
What I can do,

41 Why do you want me
To be the charioteer
Of that low-born
Son of Adhiratha, Karṇa?
O Indra-among-rājās!
Why do you ask me to stoop
To such pettiness?

42 I am better than him.
Why do I have to obey him?
He's evil.
Anyone who deposits
A loving and obedient person

43 In the hands of an evil man
Is guilty of the crime
Of treating high as low
And low as high.
Brahmā created Brahmins
From his mouth,
Kṣatriyas from his arms,

44 Vaiśyas from his thighs,
Śūdras from his feet.
The śrutis say so.
From the intermixture
Of these four castes
Have originated
Anuloma offspring
(Of lower caste mother
And upper caste father)
And *pratiloma* offspring
(Of higher caste mother
And lower caste father).

45 And many others too
Are the result of caste inter-marriages.
The Kṣatriyas protect,
Collect taxes,
And donate to charities.

46 The Brahmins
Preside at yajñas,
Teach,
Accept honest gifts.
They are the twice-born
Placed on the earth
For the welfare of the earth.

47 The Vaiśyas
Cultivate agriculture,
Rear cattle,
And give in charity
As ordained by dharma.
The Śūdras serve
Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaisyas.

48 I am a *mūrdhābhiṣikta*
Head-consecrated king,
Born in a family of rāja-ṛṣis.
I am a mahā-chariot-hero
I am praised by *sūta*-bards
And *vandi*-chanters.

49 *Sūta*-charioteers
Serve Brahmins and Kṣatriyas.
A Kṣatriya serving a charioteer –
This is something
Unheard of!

50 Being what I am –
And being also
An annihilator of enemies –
How can you expect me
To become the charioteer
Of the son of a charioteer?

51 Son of Gāndhārī!
I have been demeaned enough!
I refuse to fight today.
Give me leave
To return to my home."

52 Saying this,
Mahārāja Śalya,
The ornament of assemblies,
Stood up, enraged,
In the midst
Of that gathering of rājās,
And prepared to leave.

53 Your son Duryodhana
Lovingly and respectfully
Restrained him,
And persuaded him
With sweet and sensible speech:

54 "Śalya!
What you say is true.
Absolutely so.
But I have something else in mind.
O lord of men!
Listen to me carefully.

55 Ruler of the earth!
Karṇa doesn't excel you.
I don't doubt you.
Never will Śalya
The rājā of Madra
Do anything
That should not be done.

56 Your noble ancestors
Were the finest of men.
They followed eternal Ṛta,
Always spoke the truth.
You follow their ideal.
This I know well.

57 O noble one!
You are truly a *śalya*,
A thorn to your enemies.
The entire world
Knows you as such.

58 O you who lavish
Large *dakṣiṇā*-tributes!
You who are wise in dharma!
Do today what you said
Earlier what you would do.

59 Neither Karṇa nor I
Excel you in valour.
I ask you because none
Excels you in chariot-skill.

60 Śalya!
I think Karṇa excels
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
In many ways;
And the whole world
Thinks you excel
Even Vāsudeva-Krishna.

61 O bull-among-men!
Karṇa excels Pārtha-Arjuna
In the use of weapons,
But you excel Krishna
In equestrian science
As well as physical strength.

62 O prince of Madra!
Mahā-minded Vāsudeva-Krishna
Knows all about horses too,
But what you know about horses
Is double what he knows."

63 "Son of Gāndhārī!"
Replied Śalya,
"I am grateful to you.
I am pleased that
In front of this army
You say I excel
Devakī's son Krishna.

64 Brave hero!
I will do as you say.
I will be the charioteer
Of Rādhā's famed son Karṇa
When he battles with the sons of Pāṇḍu.

65 On one condition, however,
O brave hero.
I will say whatever I like
To the flesh-sliced Vaikartana-Karṇa."

66 O finest of rājās
Of the descendants of Bharata!
(continued Sañjaya)
Your son in the presense of Karṇa
Replied to the Madra-rājā:
"Agreed."

[VII:33:1-6]

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SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Duryodhana continued:
O lord of Madra!
Listen to what I say
About the war-between
The gods and anti-gods.

2 O finest of rāja-ṛṣis!
I will repeat what
Mahā-ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya
Once narrated to me
And to my father.

3 Listen carefully
With full attention.
The gods and anti-gods,
Each hoping for victory,

4 Once got embroiled,
O rājā,
In a fierce battle
Whose cause was Tāraka.
We had heard
That the gods defeated
The Daitya anti-gods.

5 After the Daitya defeat
The three sons of Tāraka –
Tārakākṣa, Kamalākṣa,
And Vidyunmālī –

6 Started practising
Such severe tapasyā
That their bodies,
O scorcher of foes,
Dried up and shrivelled.

7 Self-control
Tapasyā
Strict routine
Meditation ...
This so pleased
Pitāmaha Brahmā
That he decided
To grant them a boon.

8 The three brothers
Jointly asked this boon
From Brahmā the Pitāmaha
Of the three worlds:
"No creature will ever
Have power to kill us."

9 The Lord God Prabhurīśvara
Said to them:
"There is no such thing
As freedom from death,
O anti-gods.

10 Ask for any other boon
That pleases you."
O rājā!
They gave the matter
Very serious thought.

11 They praṇāmaed
Sarvalokeśvara Brahma
The Lord of all the worlds
And said:
"Pitāmaha! Lord!
Grant us this boon then:

12 Favour us your grace
To dwell in three cities
And wander the world over
With your blessing.

13 We will wander variously
A thousand years,
O defectless one,
And then meet
And become as one again.

14 If then, O Bhagavan,
Anyone with a single arrow
Can destroy all three of us –
Let that excellent god
Be the cause of our death."

15 Saying "So be it,"
Brahmā returned
To his celestial abode.
Delighted with the boon
They had received,

16 The anti-gods
Discussed among themselves
And approached Maya,
A mahā-anti-god,
The decay-less and deathless
World-Artificer Viśvakarman
Who receives pūjā from all
Daitya and Dānava anti-gods.

17 With the help of his tapasyā
Profoundly wise Maya
Constructed three cities:
One of gold,
One of silver,
One of black iron.

18 O lord of the earth!
Each city was *cakra*-based:
The gold in heaven,
The silver in inter-space,
The iron on earth.

19 Each city was
A hundred yojanas long
A hundred yojanas broad,
With any number
Of houses and mansions,
Soaring walls
And beautiful gates
And entrances.

20 So many buildings
With widely spaced roads
Separating them ...
Lavishly furnished
Palatial dwellings
With attractive gates ...

21 O rājā!
Each city had its own rājā.
The exquisitely lovely
Golden city was ruled
By Tārakākṣa.

22 The silver city was ruled
By Kamalākṣa,
The iron by Vidyunmālī.
These three Daitya rājās
Attacked
The three worlds
With their fierce weapons,

23 And shouted:
"Tell us:
Who is this character
Called Prajāpati
'The Lord of all people'?"
These three Dānava chiefs
Soon gathered around them
Hundreds of millions

24 And crores upon crores
Of brave followers
From far and near –
All of them
Arrogant flesh-eaters,
Who had in the past
Been tricked by the gods.

25 Safe now in the three cities,
They desired to become mahā-prosperous –
And Maya gave them
Whatever they wanted.

26 Under his protection
They lived fearlessly.
Whatever the desire
Of any Daitya
In any of the three cities

27 Was immediately fulfilled
By the māyā-magic of Maya.
The mahā-powerful son
Of Tārakāṣa,
A valiant hero
Named Hari,

28 Had performed the strictest
And most remarkable tapasyā,
As a result of which Brahmā Pitāmaha,
The Grandsire of the worlds,
Was pleased with Hari.

29 Hari asked the Deity
The following boon:
"Create a lake in our city
Whose waters will revive
With reboubled strength
The most grievously wounded."
The boon was granted,
And Tārakākṣa's son Hari

30 Created a lake
That could resurrect
Even the dead.
Whatever the form
And dress of a Daitya,

31 When dipped in the lake,
He rose after death
In that very shape.
And after recurrection
The Daityas continued
To harass the worlds
As they did earlier.

32 O rājā!
The gods were terrified
By the mahā-tapasyā of the Daityas
Who were now impossible
To exterminate in battle.

33 Obsessed by lust
And greed and delusion,
The Daityas began
Systematically looting
Whatever cities and towns
Pleased their fancy.

34 Arrogant with the granting of their boon,
They routed the gods
And the followers of the gods,
And roamed unrestricted
Wherever they wished.

35 They ravaged
The gardens of the gods
so dear to the gods.
The āśramas
sacred to the ṛṣis,
The elegant dwelling-places
of men and women –

36 All these were descrated
By the wicked Dānavas.
The gods
The ṛṣis
The *pitṛs*
Were made homeless
By the depredations
Of these Danavas.
Not just these –
the dwellers
of the three worlds
became victims
of the Daityas.

37 Seeing the afflictions
Of the dwellers of the three worlds,
Śakra-Indra
Assisted by the Maruts
Hurled his thunderbolt
On the three cities.

38 O lord of men!
When Puraṁdara-Indra
Failed to damage
The cities of the Brahmā-boon-protected
Daityas,

39 The lord of the gods
Fled terrified
Along with the gods
To Pitāmaha Brahmā
To inform him
Of the atrocities of the Daityas.

40 With bowed head
He stood before Pitāmaha Brahmā,
Narrated all that happened,
And asked how best
To destroy the Daityas.

41 Bhagavān Brahma listened
And said to the gods:
"Whoever harms you,
Harms me too.

42 They are wicked-ātmaned,
These anti-gods –
They hate the gods.
The pain they give you,
I feel that pain too.

43 It's true all creatures
Are the same to me.
But I have vowed
To destroy all
Who indulge in adharma.

44 Only if pierced
By a single arrow
Can those three cities
Be destroyed.
There is no other way.
No one
Can pierce all three
With a single arrow
Except Sthāṇu-Śiva.

45 So,
O sons of Aditi,
Go
To the great warrior
Sthanu
Who is also Īśāna
Who is
The victorious wonder-worker.
He is the one
Who can destroy
The anti-gods."

46 Placing Brahmā at their head,
Sakra-Indra led the gods
To seek the grace
Of bull-symbolled
Vṛṣāṅka-Śiva.

47 Accompanied by ṛṣis
Practising tapasyā and discipline,
The wise-in-dharma gods
With total ātman-concentration
Went to Bhava-Śiva
Who is like Eternal Brahmā himself.

48 They praised him
Whose ātman pervades all
Who is the ātman of all
Who is the dispeller of fear
The Mahā-ātmaned One.

49 He who meditates
on the ātman
with perfect tapasyā
He who
has complete insight
into his ātman
He who
has the ātman
in his control

50 He
who is
Īśāna
He
whose radiant energy
is incomparable
That faultless one
Umā-pati
Lord of Umā –
That Bhagavan
The gods saw

51 One!
Yet they saw him
as many.
One Mahā-ātman!
reflected in
so many ātmans!

52 They looked
at each other –
and they marvelled.
The one
in whom
all are!
They saw
the Birthless One
the Lord of the World –

53 And the gods and mahā-ṛṣis
Touched the ground with their heads.
Śaṅkara-Śiva said: "Many you prosper!"
Raising them,

54 He smiled, welcoming them.
Bhagavān Śiva asked:
"What brings you here?"
Enquired
By the three-eyed divinity Tryambaka-Śiva,
The gods happily replied:

55 "*Namo namo namaste prabho*!
Lord! We bow to you!
Devādhideva! God above all gods!
O Bow-Wielder!
Vanamāli-Śiva!

56 Destroyer of the yajña
of Prajāpati Dakṣa!
Praised even by Prajāpati Dakṣa!
O you whom all praise!
Namo! We praise you
O Śambhu-Śiva!

57 O Dark-Red Deity!
O Rudra-Śiva!
O Blue-Throated Śiva!
Trident-wielding Śiva!
Remover-of-sorrows Śiva!
Gazelle-eyed Śiva!
You who defeat
the finest of warriors!

58 Worship-deserving
Śiva!
O All-Annihilator
at the time of dissolution!
O difficult-to-defeat
Divinity!
O difficult-to-describe
Divinity!
O Seed of all!
O Brahman! O Brahmacārī!

59 O Īśāna!
Supreme Lord!
O Immeasurable One!
O Guide and Controller!
O Deity
clad in skin-dress!
O tapasyā-practising
Divinity!
O *piṅga*-yellow-
skinned one!
O strict-vowed one!
O Kṛittivāsa-skin-covered deity!

60 Father of Kumāra!
O Three-Eyed One!
O Wielder
of the finest weapons!
Destroyer of the afflictions
of all refuge-seekers!
Destroyer of Brahmā-blasphemers!

61 Lord
of the forests!
Lord
of mortals!
Namaḥ!
We bow to you.
Lord
of cows!
Lord
of yajñas!
We bow to you.

62 *Namo' astu!* We bow
to the leader of armies!
The three-eyed one!
The radiant one!
With mind and speech and deed
we above you!
Be with us, Lord!"

63 Pleased,
Bhagavān Śiva
Welcomed them with these words:
"Have no fear
Tell me what you want done."

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Duryodhana continued:
After the *pitṛs* and gods and ṛṣis
Were made fear-free
By mahā-ātmaned Śiva,
Brahma paid his respects
To Śaṅkara-Śiva
And said these words
Conducive to the welfare
Of all the worlds:

2 "Deveśa! Lord God!
Established as Prajāpati-Brahma
By the strength of your grace,
I have granted the Dānavas
A mahā-boon.

3 That boon has gone
To their heads.
O Lord of the past
And the future!
Only you can destroy them now;
Only you can be their adversary.

4 Lord God! Deveśa!
O Saṅkara-Śiva!
Favour us.
We seek your grace.
Destroy the Dānavas!

5 O respect-worthy one!
Lokeśa! Lord of the worlds!
Through your grace
The universe prospers.
You are the granter of refuge.
We seek your refuge."

6 Sthāṇu-Śiva replied:
"My view is:
Your enemies must be killed.
I cannot do this alone.
These god-hating anti-gods
Are very powerful.

7 My suggestion is: Unite.
Take half my strength
And wipe out your enemies
On the battlefield.
In unity
Lies mahā-strength."

8 The gods said:
"We have seen
Their prowess and strength.
They have twice
The prowess and strength
That we have."

9 Sthāṇu-Śiva replied:
"These vicious criminals
Deserve to die.
Any means will do.
You will be able
To destroy your foes
With half
My prowess and strength."

10 "Maheśvara-Śiva,"
The gods said,
"Half your strength
Is much too much for us.
Take half of our strength
And kill them all."

11 Sthāṇu-Śiva replied: "Very well.
If you find half
My prowess and strength
Much too much,
I will take half of yours
And kill them all."

12 O finest of rājās!
(continued Duryodhana)
The gods said, "So be it!"
With half their strength
The Lord God Śiva waxed in power.

13 So much so
His strength exceeded
That of all others,
And he became known
As Mahādeva the Mahā-Deity.

14 And Mahādeva-Śiva promised:
"With bow and arrows
I will ride a chariot
And destroy
All your enemies
On the battlefield.

15 Find me a chariot
And bow and arrows
With which I will rid the earth
Of these Daityas."

16 "Deveśvara,"
Replied the gods,
"O Lord of the gods,
From the three worlds
We will gather artifacts
And construct for you a chariot
Of incomparable excellence,

17 A beautiful vehicle
Designed by the expert
World-Artificer
Viśvakarman himself."
And so they produced
A magnificent chariot

18 Whose arrows
Were Viṣṇu-wide-ranging
Soma-moon-white
And Hutāśa-fire-blazing.
O lord of the earth!
The arrow's knots
Were Agni-fire,
The body Soma-moon,

19 And the pointed tip was Viṣṇu.
The chariot itself
Was Devī Vasundharā,
The town-and-city-garlanded
Goddess Earth,

20 With her teeming wealth
Of mountains
And forests
And islands
And life-forms of all kinds.
The Mandara mountain was the axle,
The Mahānadi Gaṅgā its sides,

21 The constellations
Its *īṣā*-fork-shaped pole,
The Kṛta-yuga
Its yuga-yoke,
The directions
Its decorations,

22 The snake-lord Vāsuki
Its *kūbara*-frame
The Himālayas its rear
And the Vindhya hills
Its front woodwork,

23 The Udaya hills
And the Asta hills
Were the woodwork
Of the wheels;
The ocean-abode of the Dānavas
Became the wavy ropes,
And the maṇḍala of seven ṛṣis –
The Ursa Major constellation
Of seven stars –
Became the protectors
Of the chariot-wheels.

24 The Gaṅgā
The Sarasvatī
The Sindhu
Were the *dhura*-speed,
And other rivers
Became miscellaneous
Upaskara-conveniences.

25 Day
Night
Kalā ($\frac{1}{900}$ of a day)

Kāṣṭhā (of a kalā)

The six seasons
Formed the under-carriage
Of the chariot.
The shining planets
And the stars
Were the *varūtha*-planks.

26 Dharma-Artha-Kāma
The Triveṇu Triple Alliance
Formed the enclosure
Fruits
Flowers
Herbs
Creepers
Formed
The tinkling rows of bells.

27 The Sun
And the Moon
Were the two other wheels
Of that splendid chariot.
Day
And Night
Were the two wings
On both sides.

28 The elephant Dhṛtarāṣṭra
And ten other
Herd-leading elephants
Were the *īṣā*-shafts.
Hissing mahā-snakes
Were the ropes
Of the chariot.

29 The sky its yoke,
Doomsday clouds
Its leather coverings;
Kālapṛṣṭha and Nahuṣa,
Karkoṭaka and Dhanañjaya,

30 And other nāga-serpents
Became the cords
Of the chariot-steeds
Tying their manes,
The cardinal directions
And the subsidiary directions
Became the reins.

31 *Saṁdhyā*-twilight
Dharma's wife Dhṛti
Medha-wisdom
Sthiti-steadfastness
Saṁnati-humility
And the sky
Scintillating
With planets
And stars
And constellations
Formed
The leather canopy
Of the chariot.

32 The god-lord Indra
The water-lord Varuṇa
The spirit-lord Yama
The wealth-lord Kubera
Were the four horses,
The new moon goddess Sinīvālī
The goddess of the fifteen-
day-moon Anumatī
The goddess of the first day
of the first quarter Kuhū
The full moon goddess Rākā
(the strict-vowed one)

33 Became
The neck-straps
Of the chariot's steeds.
Dharma
Truth
Tapasyā
Artha
Were the bridles.

34 *Manaḥ*-mind
was the foundation,
The goddess of learning
Sarasvatī the path.
Multi-coloured pennants
fluttered atop
the chariot,

35 Dazzling like lightning
and Indra's bow
the rainbow.
The Vaṣaṭkāra chant
was the whip
The Gāyatrī mantra
the upper rope.

36 The Saṁvatsara-year
fixed during the yajña
of mahā-ātmaned Īśāna
became the bow
And Sāvitrī
the bow's mahā-twang.

37 And a celestial armour
was fashioned –
maha-precious
gem-resplendent
impenetrable
spotless
beyond the touch
of the *cakra* of Kāla.

38 The flagstaff
was the golden mountain
Meru
Lightning-streaked clouds
were the pennants
flashing like sacred fires

39 Around which sit
officiating priests.
Seeing
that miraculous chariot
The gods
were spellbound.

40 For it had,
O lord of the earth,
The lustrous energy
Of all the worlds.
They informed
Mahā-ātmaned Śiva
The chariot was ready.

41 O mahārāja! O lion-among-men!
When the chariot
Designed to destroy
The enemies of the gods
Was ready,

42 Śaṅkara-Śiva
Placed his weapons in it,
And flying his flag sky-high
He emblazoned
His bull-symbol on it.

43 Protecting the chariot
On all four sides
Fully armed
Were: the rod of Brahmā
The rod of Kāla
The rod of Rudra
And Jvara-Fever.

44 Protecting the wheels
Of the chariot
Were mahā-ātmaned Atharvan
And Aṅgiras.
In front stood
The Ṛg and Sāma Veda
And the Purāṇas

45 At the back stood
The Itihāsas and Yajur-Veda
And Divine Speech
And Knowledge
Of all kinds.

46 O Indra-among-rājās!
Stotra-chants
And *vaṣaṭkāra*-chants
And the sacred syllable

How magnificent they looked
Standing in front!

47 The wondrous Year
And the six seasons
Were his bow,
His own shadow
The bowstring –
Indestructible in battle!

48 Rudra-Śiva
    is Kāla
The Year of Kāla
    his bow
The Night of Kāla
    is Bhagavān Śiva's
    indestructible bowstring.

49 Viṣṇu
Jvalana-Agni
And Soma-Moon
Were the arrows
Because the world
is a construct
of Agni and Soma
And the world
is pervaded by
Viṣṇu the Pervader.

50 The ātman
of infinitely radiant
Bhava-Śiva
is Viṣṇu.
It is not possible
for the Daityas
to survive
the touch
of the bow-string
of Hara-Śiva.

51 Īśvara-Śiva
has infused his wrath
and the irresistible wrath
Of Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras,
blazing like fire,
in those arrows.

52 A blaze of fire!
Animal-skin-covered Kṛttivāsa-Śiva!
Dark-blue-red- smoke-coloured Śiva!
Blazing with the brightness
Of thousands of suns!

53 Hara-Śiva!
Destroyer of the difficult-to-destroy!
Destroyer of the enemies of Brahmā!
Protector of dharma-followers!
Destroyer of adharma-perpetrators!

54 Bhagavān Śiva
Blazing with brightness!
Surrounded by hosts of followers
    foe-crushing
    fearful-looking
    fiercely powerful
    mind-swift!
Radiant Sthāṇu-Śiva!

55 O rājā!
Sheltering in the shadow of his body,
This entire universe
Of moving and unmoving life
Basked in his blessing.

56 He saw the chariot.
He put on armour.
He lifted the Soma-Viṣṇu-
Agni-charged bow.
He prepared for battle.

57 O rājā! *Prabhu!* Lord!
The gods then ordered
The finest of the gods –
The wind god –
To blow
Sweet and sacred and soft.

58 Then Mahādeva-Śiva
Mounted the chariot.
And the gods shuddered
And the earth trembled
As he did so.

59 "Deveśa-Śiva Lord-of-gods Śiva
Is mounting the chariot!"
The supreme ṛṣis
Sang his praises –
    and the gandharvas
    and the gods
    and the apsarās.

60 And the Brahmā-ṛṣis
praised him
And the Vandī-bards
extolled him
And the fleet-footed apsarās
danced for him

61 And Śiva the splendid
Granter-of-boons
armed with the sword
the bow and arrow
smiled
and said to the gods:
"Who is my charioteer?"

62 The gods heard
and replied:
"Deveśa! God of gods!
Whoever you choose
Will be your charioteer.
None else."

63 And Śiva said:
"Waste no time.
Find one superior to me.
Appoint him my charioteer."

64 The gods listened
to the advice
of mahā-ātmaned Śiva
and trooped
to Pitāmaha Brahmā
and said:

65 "Deva! God!
We did exactly
as you advised us
to ensure the destruction
of the enemies
of the gods.
Bull-flagged Śiva
Is pleased with us.

66 We constructed
a wonderful chariot
loaded with weapons.
But who
will be the charioteer?
This we do not know.

67 O God above all!
Vibho! Lord!
Select a charioteer.
The word
you gave us
let it bear fruit.

68 Bhagavan! Lord! Revered one!
You told us:
'I will see
that you prosper'.
Help us.
Fulfil that promise.

69 Deva! God!
Undefeatable
is our chariot,
specially designed
to annihilate
all enemies.
Pināka-pāṇī
trident-wielding Śiva
will ride it.
He is ready
to rout
the terrified Dānavas.

70 The four Vedas
are his four steeds
The hill-filled earth
is his chariot
The stars his weapons
Hara-Śiva is the warrior –
But we have no charioteer.

71 The charioteer we need
Must be the finest of us all –
For the chariot,
The horses,
The warrior
Depend on the charioteer.

72 Pitāmaha Brahmā!
The efficacy of armour,
Of weapons, of the bow
Depends on the charioteer.
We see none but you
Fit to be the charioteer.

73 *Prabhu!* Lord!
You are the finest
All-guṇa-possessing god.
Be the charioteer.
Climb into the chariot,
And drive
These magnificent steeds

74 And rout the enemies of the gods
And ensure the victory of the gods."
Bowing their heads
Before Pitāmaha Brahmā,
The Lord of the three worlds,

75 The gods supplicated for his help.
So have we heard.
Brahmā Pitāmaha replied:
"Tridivaukasas! Dwellers of heaven!
What you say is true.

76 When matted-haired Kapardin-Śiva fights,
I will hold the reins."
Bhagavān Deva
World-Creator
Pitāmaha Brahmā

77 Was appointed by the gods
As the charioteer
Of mahā-ātmaned Īśāna-Śiva.
As he ascended
That people-praised chariot,

78 The wind-swift steeds
Bowed their heads low,
Touching the ground.
Climbing the chariot,
Bhagavān Brahmā
Blazed in the beauty
Of his own brilliance;

79 Pitāmaha Brahmā
Took the reins
In both his hands,
And raising the heads
Of the wind-swift horses,

80 The Supreme Deity Bhagavān Brahma
Said to Sthāṇu-Śiva:
"Ascend the chariot."
Lifting the Viṣṇu-Soma-
Agni-artifacted arrow,

81 Śthaṇu-Śiva,
Terrifying his enemies with his bow,
Climbed into the chariot.
Ensconced in the chariot,
He was extolled as Devesa God-of-gods
By the finest of ṛṣis,

82 By the hosts of gods,
By Gandharvas
And all the apsarās.
Sword-bow-and-arrow-wielding,
Magnificent granter-of-boons Śiva,

83 Ensconced in his chariot,
Dazed with his dazzle
All the three worlds.
Deva Śiva said to the gods
Headed by Indra:

84 "Do not give in to grief thinking
'What if he spares
The Daitya anti-gods?'
Consider the anti-gods
As already dead,
Decimated by this arrow."

85 Hearing this,
The gods exclaimed:
"Your words are true.
They are indeed dead.
What Bhagavān Lord Śiva says
Can never be not true."

86 This thought pleased
The gods immensely.
Deveśa God-of-gods Śiva,
Encircled
By the hosts of gods,

87 Rode away, O rājā,
In that magnificent,
Truly incomparable chariot.
The mahā-illustrious Deity Śiva
Was offered pūjā
By his followers –

88 Some dancing
In front of the chariot,
The difficult-to-defeat
Hosts of meat-eaters,
Prancing and screaming joyfully
At each other.

89 Mahā-guṇa-accomplished
Mahā-fortunate
Tapasyā-practising ṛṣis
And gods and others
Raised victory songs
For Mahādeva-Śiva.

90 O finest of men!
Such lavish praise
Of fear-removing
By Deveśa-Śiva God of gods
Pacified the minds
Of all in the three worlds
And pleased the gods.

91 O rājā!
The ṛṣis extolled him
In numerous hymns
And his glory kept growing
From more to more.

92 And his glory swelled
As he proceeded
And hundreds and thousands
And crores of gandharvas
Played a multiplicity
Of musical instruments.

93 As boon-granting Śiva
Drove in his chariot
Towards the anti-gods,
Smilingly
He spoke these sweet words
To Brahmā-Viśveśa
The Lord of the universe:

94 "Deva! God!
Drive carefully towards the Daityas
And witness my valour
As I slaughter our foes in battle."

95 Then, O rājā,
Brahmā urged
The mind-and-wind-swift steeds
Towards the three cities
Guarded by the Daityas and Dānavas.

96 The people-praised horses
Sped swiftly,
Drinking the sky –
So it seemed.
Bhagavān Śiva
Was eager to bring
A swift victory
For the heaven-dwellers.

97 Even as Bhava-Śiva
Sped towards the three Cities,
His Nandī bull
Deafened the directions
With a mahā-bellow.

98 The terrifying roar of that bull
Made many followers
Of the Daitya Tāraka
Drop
Instantaneously dead.

99 The others
Took up battle stations
Against Sthāṇu-Śiva.
O mahārāja!
Trident-wielding Śiva
Flared up in anger.

100 All creatures
terrified . . .
The three worlds
shaking . . .
Ill omens everywhere
As Śiva nocked his arrow.

101 Such was the pressure
Of the arrow graced by
Soma
Agni-Viṣṇu
Brahmā
Rudra-Śiva
That the chariot
began to sink.

102 Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu
Emerged from the arrow
In the shape of a bull
And lifted the chariot.

103 While it was sinking,
The foes roared
in delight
And mahā-powerful
Bhagavān Śiva
roared back.

104 O honour-bestowing lord!
Bhagavān Rudra-Śiva
Stood on the head of the bull
And the backs of the steeds
And surveyed
The city of the Dānavas.

105 O finest of men!
Standing on bull-head and steed-back,
Rudra-Śiva sliced in two
The bull's hooves
And severed the steeds' nipples.

106 O rājā! May you prosper!
From that day
Cattle have cleft hooves,
And horses
From that day
Have no nipples,

107 Afflicted by the marvellous wonder-work
Of powerful Rudra-Śiva.
Śarva-Śiva pulled
His bowstring taut
And nocked his arrow.

108 Fitting
His Pāśupata-missile
To the arrow,
He aimed at the Three Cities,
And then, O mahārāja,
As he stood there
    ready to shoot,

109 The Three Cities united,
Impelled as if by Kāla
And when the three
Became
Clearly one,

110 The delight
Of the mahā-ātmaned gods
Knew no bounds.
The hosts of gods
The Siddhas
The finest of ṛṣis

111 Exclaimed: "Jaya! Victory!"
And started singing
The praises of Maheśvara-Śiva.
Then appeared before
The anti-god-slayer Śiva –
The three cities! –

112 Before the dreaded –
And-dreadful indescribable
Unrepulsable god Śiva.
Then Lokeśvara-Śiva
Pulled to the full his celestial bow,

113 And shot his
Three-world-essence-filled arrow
At Tripura,
At the three Cities.
O fortune-favoured one!
As soon as released,
That arrow

114 Created a commotion
A mahā-chaos of screams and roars
In the Three Cities.
He threw the bodies
Of the slaughtered anti-gods
In the western ocean.

115 This was how
Three-world-welfare-wishing
Maheśvara-Śiva
Wrathfully destroyed
The Three Cities
And their Dānava-dwellers.

116 Three-eyed Tryakṣa-Śiva
Calmed the fire
That blazed from his wrath,
Saying "Ha! Ha!
Do not reduce the world to ashes!"

117 The gods and ṛṣis
And all the dwellers
Of the three worlds
Returned to normal
And extolled
The illimitable glory
Of Sthāṇu-Śiva.

118 Having accomplished
All they came for,
Prajāpati-Brahmā
And the hosts of gods
Returned to their abodes.

119 This was the way
Lokasraṣṭā World-Creator
Bhagavān Maheśvara-Śiva
Lord of the gods
and anti-gods
Restored the welfare
of the worlds.

120 And so
Just as Bhagavān
Pitāmaha-Brahmā
Lokadhātā World-Creator
Became the charioteer
Of Rudra-Śiva,

121 Should you hold the reins
Of the chariot-steeds of Karṇa
Rādhā's mahā-ātmaned son –
As Pitāmaha-Brahmā did for Rudra-Śiva.

122 O tiger-among-rājās!
You excel Krishna
And Karṇa
And Phālguna-Arjuna –
Of this there is no doubt at all.

123 You are like Rudra-Śiva
In battle.
You are like Brahmā
In strategy.
You will rout our foes
Who are like anti-gods.

124 Śalya!
Do this –
And do it quickly!
So that Karṇa
Can speedily kill
White-horsed Kaunteya-Arjuna
Whose charioteer is Krishna.

125 O rājā of Madra!
I depend on you
For my kingdom,
For my very life.
With you as Karṇa's charioteer,
Victory on the battlefield will be ours.

126 The fate of Karṇa,
Of our kingdom,
Of us,
Of victory for us,
Rests in your hands.
Take in your hands
The reins of these fine steeds.

127 O rājā!
Listen to another
True story narrated
In my father's presence
By a dharma-versed Brahmin.

128 Śalya!
Listen to this marvellous account
Of cause and effect,
And then do what should be done.
Do not take it otherwise.

129 In the Bhārgava family
Was born
Mahā-illustrious Jamadagni
Whose son was the guṇa-glorious
Renowned Paraśurāma.

130 He practised the most severe tapasyā
In order to please Bhava-Śiva.
Cheerfully he disciplined
His mind and senses
With the aim of obtaining a weapon.

131 His mind-discipline and bhakti
Pleased Mahādeva-Śiva.
Śaṅkara-Śiva divined
His heart's desire
And appeared before him.

132 Maheśvara-Śiva asked:
"Paraśurāma!
Bhadraṁte! May you prosper!
I am pleased with you.
I have read your mind.
Purify your ātman.
All that you desire will be yours.

133 Only when you are pure
Will I give you my weapons
Because they incinerate
Anyone who is
Undeserving and incompetent."

134 Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
Heard the words
Of the trident-wielding God-of-gods
Devadeva-Śiva
And with bowed head
Said to the mahā-ātmaned Deity:

135 "Deveśa God-of-gods!
If you think me worthy
Of receiving the weapons,
Then only favour me
With the weapons."

136 Then (continued Duryodhana)
With tapasyā, self-control,
Dedication, pūjā,
Offerings, sacrifices
Homas and mantras,
He propitiated

137 He propitiated Śarva-Śiva
Over many long years.
Pleased with the Bhārgava,
With mahā-ātmaned Paraśurāma,

138 In the presence of Pārvati-devī
Śiva repeatedly praised
The guṇas of Paraśurāma:
"He is strict-vowed
And is full of bhakti for me."

139 O foe-destroyer!
Lord Śiva continued
Praising the guṅas
Of Paraśurāma
Before the gods
And the *pitṛs,*
So pleased was he.

140 "This was the time the Daityas,
Bloated with pride and delusion,
Became mahā-powerful
And started harassing
The heaven-dwelling gods.

141 So the gods
Joined hands, determined
To wipe out the Daityas,
Their enemies;
But all their efforts
Proved unsuccessful.

142 And so the gods
Approached with bhakti
Umā's consort Maheśvara-Śiva,
Propitiated him,
Saying: "Lord!
Destroy our enemies."

143 God Śiva
Promised the gods
That their enemies
Would be annihilated.
Śaṅkara-Śiva summoned Bhārgava Paraśurāma
And said:

144 "Bhārgava!
For the good of the worlds
And for my good
If you wish to please me,
Exterminate
All the enemies of the gods."

145 Hearing this,
Paraśurāma replied
To the boon-granting
Three-eyed Tryambaka-Śiva:
"What śakti have I,
O God-of-gods, what weapons

146 Have I with which
To destroy the Dānavas
Who are deadly in war
And expert in all weapons?"
Maheśvara-Śiva replied:
"Go! Go because I order you!
Destroy all enemies!

147 Win you will
After killing them all,
And much merit
Will accrue to you."
Having heard him,
He honoured him.

148 With *svasti*-benedictions
Paraśurāma proceeded against the Dānavas,
And said to the mahā-proud and powerful
Enemies of the gods:

149 "War-proud
War-berserk Daityas!
Fight with me!
Mahā-anti-gods!
I am sent by Devadeva God-of-gods
Śiva himself
To destroy you!"

150 They heard Bhārgava Paraśurāma
And faced him in battle.
The Bhārgava descendant
Wiped out the Daityas
On the battlefield

151 With thunder-stroke
And lightning-slash,
But in the clash
The finest of the twice-born
Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma
Was grievously wounded.

152 But all the wounds healed
When touched by the hands
Of Sthāṇu-Śiva.
Bhagavān Śiva was pleased by the feat
Of Paraśurāma.

153 Devadeva
    God-of-gods Śiva
Śūlin
    Trident-wielding Śiva
Pleased
    with mahā-ātmaned
    Bhārgava Paraśurāma
Gave him countless boons.

154 "Descendant of Bhṛgu!
The wounds on your body
Inflicted by the weapons of the Daityas
Have cleansed you of mortal karma.

155 You are now worthy
To receive from me
Whatever celestial weapons you desire."
And so (continued Duryodhana)
Receiving all the weapons
That he desired,

156 Paraśurāma *praṇama-ed* Bhava-Siva
By lowering his head at his feet.
Taking the permission
Of Devesa-Śiva
Of mahā-tapasyā,
Paraśurāma left.

157 This is the ancient story
Narrated by the ṛṣi
To my father Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Bhārgava Paraśurāma
Gave *dhanur*-veda archery-expertise
To mahā-ātmaned.

158 Karṇa,
So pleased was he
In his heart of heart,
O tiger-among-men.
So you see, O lord of the earth,
If Karṇa is in any way blemished,

159 Would Paraśurāma the Bhargava descendant
Have given him the celestial weapon?
I do not think
Karṇa was born
In a charioteer's family.

160 I think he is the son of a god.
I think
He was born in a Kṣatriya family.

161 I think
He was abandoned
By that family.
Śalya!
I refuse to believe
He is the son
Of a charioteer.
Flesh-earrings
Flesh-armour
Long-armed
Mahā-chariot-hero

162 Sun-brilliant –
Can a deer
give birth
to a tiger?
Look
at his arms –
massive
like the trunk
of a king-elephant!

163 Look
at his chest –
so broad
it can absorb
the assaults
of all enemies.
O Indra-among-rājās!
This Karṇa
who is Vaikartana
This bull-among-men
this valiant
mahātmā
This follower
of Paraśurāma
is no ordinary mortal.

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 Duryodhana continued:
"This was how
The Grandsire of all the worlds
Pitāmaha Bhagavān Brahmā Deva
Became the charioteer
Of the hero of chariot-warfare
Rudra-Śiva.

2 Only he who excels a chariot-hero
Should be the charioteer of a chariot-hero
Which is why,
O tiger-among-men,
You should hold the reins.

3 Pitāmaha Brahmā
Was chosen by the gods
With great discrimination.
We have selected you
With the same care,
Knowing that you are superior to Karṇa.

4 Mahārāja!
The gods chose Pitāmaha Brahmā
Because they were convinced
He was superior to Rudra-Śiva.

5 It is you
Who must hold the reins
On that mahā-battlefield."
Śalya replied:
"O finest of men!
Narrated many times,
This excellent, divine

6 Story I have heard
From learned men
About how Pitāmaha Brahmā
Became the charioteer of Bhava-Śiva.

7 O descendant of Bharata!
How with a single arrow
Did he wipe out
The hosts of anti-gods.
This ancient story
Was known in full
By Krishna too –

8 About how
Pitāmaha Bhagavān Brahmā
Became the charioteer of Śiva –
Because Krishna knows
All there is to know
About past and future.

9 O Bharata-descendant!
It is precisely
Because he knew
How Svayambhu Self-Born Brahmā
Became Rudra-Śiva's charioteer
That Krishna became
Pārtha-Arjuna's charioteer.

10 Should the Sūtā's son Karṇa
Succeed in killing Pārtha-Arjuna,
Keśava-Krishna
Will personally fight
On the battlefield.

11 Conch-*cakra*-and-mace-wielding Krishna
Will destroy your entire army.
When anger suffuses
The mahā-ātmaned Vṛṣṇi-descendant Krishna,

12 There is not one king
In our entire army
Who has the power to stop him."
O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Hearing these words
Of the Madra-rājā Śalya,
Your foe-exterminating

13 Son Duryodhana,
Mahā-powerful, unperturbed,
Said: "Strong-armed one!
Do not on the battlefield
Belittle Vaikartana-Karṇa

14 Who excels all wielders
Of *śastra*-weapons
And has over-reached
All knowers of *śāstra*-scriptures.
Hearing the mahā-fearful
Twang of his bowstring,

15 The armies of the Pāṇḍavas
Scatter in all ten directions.
O mahā-powerful hero!
With your own eyes
You have seen, that night,
How Ghaṭotkaca,

16 The māyā-manipulator, was killed
Despite his hundreds of māyā-deceptions.
Nor could dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
Withstand Karṇa

17 Who surrounded him
All these days
With so many mahā-fears.
And powerful Bhīma,
Cornered by the bow-ends of Karṇa,

18 Could hardly retort
To the vilifications of Karṇa,
O rājā,
Who branded Bhīma
'Fool!' and 'Glutton'.
In the maha-battle
Karṇa routed Mādrī's sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,

19 But for some reason spared their lives.
O lord of the earth!
Valiant Sātyaki,
The Sātvata hero of the Vṛṣṇi clan,

20 Was defeated
And unchariotted
By Karṇa on the battlefield.
And all the Sṛñjayas
And Dhṛṣṭadyumna as well

21 Were defeated by him
Again and again
With a smile on his face.
How can the Pāṇḍavas
Ever hope to defeat
On the battlefield
A mahā-chariot-hero

22 Who if angered
Can destroy even
Thunderbolt-wielding Puraṁdara-Indra?
You too are expert in *astra*-weapons,
Well-versed in weapons of war.

23 In hand-to-hand combat,
In strength of arms,
There is none in the world
To equal you.
You are *śalya-bhūta*,
'Spear-tip personified',

24 Which is why,
O foe-smiting rājā,
Your name is Śalya.
Confronted by the strength
Of your arms,
The hosts of Sātvatas
Will collapse.

25 O rājā!
Does even Krishna
Excel you in the strength
Of your muscular arms?
If Phālguna-Arjuna is killed,
Krishna will bolster the Pāṇḍavas;

26 If Karṇa is killed,
My mahā-army will be in your hands.
If Vāsudeva-Krishna
Can take the responsibility
Of crushing our army,

27 What is preventing you,
O lord of the earth,
From deciding
To crush their army?
O lord of the earth!
It is my faith in you
That makes me follow
The ideas of all those of our army
Who have perished in the war."

28 "Gāndhārī's son," said Śalya,
"I am happy you think
Me to be superior
To Devakī's son Krishna.

29 Brave one!
I will do what you ask.
I will be the charioteer
Of Rādhā's illustrious son Karṇa
When he battles against
That finest Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

30 Brave one!
On one condition, though:
I will say whatever I like
To flesh-hacker-and-sacrificer
Vaikartana-Karṇa."

31 O rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
O lord of the earth!
In front of all the soldiers
Your son Duryodhana
Said to the Madra-rājā-Śalya:
"Agreed. So be it."

32 Assured by Śalya
Agreeing to become Karṇa's charioteer,
Duryodhana, overjoyed,
Embraced Karṇa.

33 And even as praises
Were chanted in his honour,
Your son Duryodhana
Said to Karṇa:
"Kill all the Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas
In battle today
As Mahendra-Indra
Killed the Dānavas."

34 Delighted with Śalya's
Agreeing
To become his charioteer
Karṇa
Said to Duryodhana:

35 "O rājā!
The rājā of Madra
Does not seem to be
All that happy
With his decision.
Try him again
With sweet persuasion."

36 Mahā-learned and
All-weapons-expert and
Powerful Duryodhana
Said to the lord-of-the-earth
Madra-rājā Śalya

37 In a cloud-roaring
Voice that reverberated
Echoing everywhere:
"Śalya!
Karṇa today
Is eager to battle with Arjuna.

38 O rājā! O tiger-among-men!
I implore you
Again and again
To be his charioteer.
He has already killed many –
Now he wishes to kill
Phālguna-Arjuna.

39 O rājā!
I entreat you
Once more – hold
The reins of his chariot.
Krishna is Pārtha-Arjuna's
Counsellor and charioteer;
You should be the supporter
Of Rādhā's son Karṇa."

40 The rājā of Madra happily
(continued Sañjaya)
Embraced your foe-destroying
Son Duryodhana, and said:

41 "Son of Gāndhārī! Duryodhana!
O handsome rājā!
If you are so pleased
To get this done,
Then I will do
What you want to get done.

42 O finest of the Bharatas!
What I can do,
I will do with all my heart
Because you want me to do it.

43 On one condition:
Because I mean well,
You and Karna
Must promise to excuse
Whatever I say to Karṇa,
Pleasant or unpleasant."

44 "Rājā of Madra!" said Karṇa.
"Like Brahmā
Working for the welfare
Of Īśāna-Śiva,
Like Keśava-Krishna
Working for the welfare
Of Pārtha-Arjuna,
So must you
Work for my welfare."

45 Śalya replied:
"Self-blame
Self-pūjā
Blaming others
Flattering others –
These four –
These are never to be seen
In the behaviour
Of respectable people.

46 But you are learned.
So listen to me carefully
If I praise myself,
For I do so
To give you confidence.

47 *Prabhu!* Lord!
In caution,
In horse-skills,
In managing them
And trealing them,
In specialised knowledge,
I am like Mātali,
The charioteer of Śakra-Indra.

48 O defectless one!
When you fight Pārtha-Arjuna,
I will control the horses.
O Sūtaja! Son of a charioteer!
Have no fears on that account."

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 Duryodhana said:
"The rājā of Madra
Will be your charioteer.
He is better than Krishna.
He is like Mātali,
Deveśa-Indra's charioteer.

2 Like Mātali
Controlling the chariot
Of Indra pulled
By Harihaya-horses,
Śalya will manage
Your chariot and horses.

3 You the warrior
And the rājā of Madra the charioteer
Will together rout
The Pārtha-Pāṇḍavas."

4 Next morning, O rājā,
(continued Sañjaya)
Duryodhana said
To the battle-ready
Rājā of Madra:

5 "O rājā-of-Madra Śalya!
Karṇa's excellent steeds
Are in your hands.
With your assistance
Rādhā's son Karṇa
Will defeat
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

6 O Bharata-descendant!
Śalya heard.
He touched the chariot
And said, "So be it."
After Śalya's full consent
To drive his chariot,
Karṇa happily said:

7 "Charioteer!
Equip and make ready the chariot!"
Getting ready
That victorious chariot,
As magnificent as
The city of the Gandharvas,

8 Unparalleled and auspicious,
Śalya said: "It is ready.
May victory be yours!"
Finest-of-chariot-heroes
Karṇa, venerating

9 The chariot already blessed
By a priest well-versed
In Veda-wisdom,
Did *pradakṣiṇa* around the vehicle
And worshipped
Bhāskara the sun-god;

10 After which he turned
To the Madra-rājā Śalya
Standing near him and said:
"Ascend the chariot."
Into Karṇa's massive
Difficult-to-destroy chariot

11 Climbed mahā-energetic Śalya,
Like a lion climbing a hill.
Seeing Śalya staioned
In his wondrous chariot,

12 Karṇa climbed in also,
Like Divākara the sun god
Riding
A cloud-congregation
Charged with lightning.

13 Like Sūrya and Agni,
The sun and fire,
Together riding
A cloud-congregation,
They dazzled, those two,
Seated together in that chariot.
Both heroes were praised

14 As Indra and Agni
Are praised in a yajña
By *ṛtviks* and *sadasyas.*
Salya held the reins
Sitting in the chariot,
Karṇa

15 Stretched to the full
His dreaded bow
Till it looked
As if the sun
Was aflame
With a dazzling halo.

16 Lion-among-men
Karṇa!
Seated in the chariot
Karṇa!
The arrows of the hero
Karṇa
Were the rays of the sun
On Mandara mountain!
Seated in the chariot
Karṇa!
Hero of infinite energy
Karṇa!

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 Duryodhana
Turned
To the son of Rādhā
Karṇa
And said:
"The difficult deed
Which Droṇa and Bhīṣma
Failed to do –

18 That is now
Yours to do,
O son of Adhiratha!
Yours to do
In the presence of
These brilliant bowmen!
I had thought
Those two mahā-chariot-heroes
Bhīṣma and Droṇa

19 Would have no problem
Finishing off
Arjuna and Bhīma.
The valiant karma
They could not do
In the mahā-clash –

20 Is yours to do
Like thunderbolt-wielding Indra.
Son of Rādhā!
Capture Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

21 Bhīma,
And Mādrī's twin sons –
Kill them!
O bull-brave hero!
Jaya'sca te'astu:
May victory be yours!
Bhadraṁ te!
May you prosper!

22 Go now and exterminate
The sons of Pāṇḍu and their armies."
Thousands of *tūrya*-trumpets
And *bherī*-drums sounded,

23 Like the roaring
Of clouds in the sky.
Seated-in-the-chariot
Excellent chariot-hero Karṇa
Accepted the command.

24 Rādhā's son Karṇa
Said
To expert-in-warfare Śalya:
"Mahā-muscled one!
Drive my chariot
Where Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

25 Bhīma,
The twins,
And rājā Yudhiṣṭhira are –
So I can kill them.
Śalya!
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna will today see
The strength of my arms

26 When I let fly
Thousands of *kaṅka*-
Feathered arrows.
Today, Śalya,
I will shoot
The fiercest arrows

27 Because I have determined
To wipe out the Pāṇḍavas
And ensure the victory of Duryodhana."
Śalya said:
"Son of a charioteer!
You think poorly of the Pāṇḍavas.

28 All of them know
All about weapons,
All of them
Are brilliant bowmen,
All of them
Are mahā-powerful,
All of them
Never retreat in battle,
All of them
Are mahā-fortune-favoured.
All of them
Are truly valiant.

29 They could strike terror
Even in the heart
Of Śatakratu-Indra
Indra-of-a-hundred-sacrifices.
When you hear in battle
The thunderous peal,

30 O son of Rādhā, Karṇa,
Of the Gāṇḍīva-bow,
Then you will not speak
As you speak now.
When you see Bhīma
On the battlefield
Smashing the elephants'

31 Tusks before killing them,
Then you will not speak
As you speak now.
And when you see
On the battlefield
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
And his twin brothers

32 Nakula and Sahadeva
And other formidable kings
Dexterously shooting arrows
And swiftly creating
A cloud-shadow
Of arrows in the sky
Overhanging the battlefield,
And decimating their enemies
One by one,
Then you will not speak
As you speak now."

33 But Karṇa
(continued Sañjaya)
Spurned the advice
Of the rājā-of-Madra
Śalya,
And instead
Ordered the rājā-of-Madra
Śalya:
"Drive ahead!"

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Sañjaya continued:
Seeing the mahā-bowman
Karṇa
Proceeding to battle,
All the Kauravas
Broke into peals of joy.

2 *Dundubhi*-drums
And *bheri*-drums
Sounded . . .
Twanging of bows . . .
Varied war-cries
Of heroes . . .

3 All of them
With minds prepared
To meet death.
With Karṇa driving
Ahead, the soldiers
Were overjoyed.

4 O rājā!
The ground trembled
And weird noises
Issued from it.
Seven mahā-planets
Appeared in the sky,

5 Meteors fell,
The directions seemed
To burst into flame,
Cloudless lightning flashed,
Horrendous winds blew.

6 Portending
A mahā-massacre,
Countless birds and beasts
Screamed, keeping to
The right flank of your army.

7 As soon as Karṇa appeared,
His horses collapsed.
A ghastly shower of bones
Fell from the sky.

8 O lord of the earth!
Weapons
burst into flame!
War-flags
became limp!
Chariots
shed tears!

9 And other
dreadful omens
Signalled
the destruction
of the Kauravas.

10 Duped
by their *daiva*-
desting
They ignored
the signs
of doom.
The kings greeted Karṇa
With shouts of "Victory!"

11 The Kauravas were confident
The Pāṇḍavas would lose.
O king! Tall in his chariot
Foe-subduing
Vaikartana-Karṇa
Blazing-brilliant
Like sun or fire
Desired the deaths
Of Bhīṣma and Droṇa.

12 He recalled
The splendid feats of Pārtha-Arjuna.
He burned with pride
And *abhimān* self-importance.
He breathed
Long and heavy sighs,
And turning to Śalya
He said:

13 "When I sit
in my chariot
bow in hand,
I do not fear
even Mahendra-Indra
wielding his thunderbolt
in flaming anger.
When I see Bhīṣma
and other heroes
sprawled dead
on the field of battle,
I am not concerned.

14 If enemies could kill
Bhīṣma and Droṇa
Who were like Viṣṇu
and Mahendra-Indra
and who routed chariots
and elephants and horses –
What chance have I?
Yet I am not afraid.

15 Why was Droṇa
mahā-weapons-expert
immensely powerful
bull-brave Brahmin
military guru
unable to kill
his enemies who slaughtered
chariot-heroes, elephant-
riders and charioteers?

16 Listen to me,
O Kauravas!
Listen carefully.
I think of Droṇa
killed in this maha-
clashed by his foes.
There is none
except me
who can face Arjuna.
He appears before us
In the shape of Death.

17 Skill
Accuracy
Strength
Patience
Mahā-weapons
Strategy –
Mahātmā Droṇa had them all.
Yet he became Death's victim
I think all of us will be chosen next.

18 I think
cause-and-effect karma
rules this world.
Nothing is permanent.
If guru Droṇa
could be killed,
Who can be sure
of tomorrow's sunrise?

19 Wepons
Strength
Valour
Rituals
Wise planning
Excellent defence system –
These will not assure happiness.
They certainly did not save guru Droṇa.

20 In *tejasa*-energy
like the sun
like fire
In *parakrama*-valour
like Viṣṇu
like Purandara-Indra
In *naya*-strategy
like Bṛhaspati
like Uśanas –
Yet formidable Droṇa perished!

21 There is weeping
and wailing, O Śalya,
by women and children,
The male ego
of Duryodhana
is humbled.
They depend on me
to act
in this crisis,
So drive me,
O Śalya,
to the field of battle.

22 Who except me
Will dare to face
Firm-in-truth rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
Bhima
Arjuna
Vāsudeva-Krishna
Sṛñjaya and Sātyaki
Nakula and Sahadeva?

23 O lord of Madra!
So drive me
to the field
To the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas
and Sṛñjayas –
Either I kill
them in battle today
or I take the path
to the realm of Yama
the realm of Death
where Droṇa has gone.

24 Do not think, Śalya,
I will not penetrate
their armies' centre.
If I do not, my friends
will become bitter,
which I do not like.
I will gave up my life,
as Droṇa did.

25 Wise man or foolish,
go one must,
when the end comes.
O learned one,
I will attack
Pārtha-Arjuna.
I cannot escape
the call
of diṣṭa-destiny.

26 I have always
received goodness
at the hands
Of rājā Duryodhana,
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Vicitravīrya's grandson.
For his welfare
I am ready today
to sacrifice that
Which is most difficult
to sacrifice – one's life.

27 I have received
from Paraśurāma
this incomparable chariot,
tiger-skin-covered,
splendid-horse-driven,
triple-gold-treasured,
silver-*triveṇu*-shining,
axle-and-wheels
noiselessly moving.

28 Śalya! He equipped
This chariot with beautiful bows
Fearful arrows
Flags
Maces
This dazzling sword
The finest weapons
And this dreadfullydeafening
pure-white conch.

29 Riding this chariot,
flags fluttering,
white-horse-pulled,
loaded with quivers,
moving with the speed
of a thunderbolt,
riding this chariot,
I shall kill Arjuna
with my full power.

30 Even if Death
the destroyer
of all
decides to come
to the acid of
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna,
I will kill
Death himself
on the battlefield,
Or, failing that, die like Bhīṣma.

31 What is the point
in saying
all this?
Let Yama come,
let Varuṇa, Kubera,
Vāsava-Indra –
Let all of them come
to help Pāṇḍava-
Arjuna in battle –
I will meet them
on the field
and defeat them all."

32 The rājā of Madra
(Sañjaya continued)
heard the self-praise
Of war-eager Karṇa
and smiled
scornfully.
He interrupted Karṇa, saying:

33 "Stop it,
O Karṇa,
Stop it!
So much energy!
Such big talk!
Finest-of-men Arjuna
On the one hand –
and vilest-of-men you
on the other!

34 Tell me:
Who but Arjuna
finest-among-men
Would have the courage
to carry away
the younger sister
Of Puruṣavara-Krishna
from the Yādava capital
guarded by Upendra-Viṣṇu
and resembling the Tridaśa-heaven
of the rājā-of-gods Indra?

35 Who but Arjuna,
powerful like Indra
the lord of the gods,
Would choose the occasion
of the slaughter
of an animal
to fight Īśvareśvara
God-of-gods
Bhava-Śiva?

36 To propitiate Agni the god of fire
Whose glory he praised
Jaya-Arjuna offered as oblation
Anti-gods and gods
Maha-*uraga* serpents
And humans
Garuda and Piśācas
Yakṣas and Rākṣasas –
All killed by his arrows.

37 Do you remember
the time Arjuna
with arrows that shone
with the dazzle
of the sun –
incomparable arrows –
Killed the enemies
who imprisoned Duryodhana
and so saved Duryodhana?

38 That was the time
you were the first
to flee the battle.
Do you remember?
That was the time
the Pāṇḍavas defeated
the Gandharvas
and saved the quarrelsome
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
from capture and prison. Remember?

39 Remember the time
of the stealing
of cows
When valiant
and finest-of-men
Arjuna defeated
all of you –
Guru Droṇa
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
and Bhīṣma?
Why could you not
defeat him then?

40 O Karṇa!
Son of a charioteer!
Today's the test –
a second battle!
If you do not flee
the moment
the battle begins, you will be killed."

41 Straight-speaking Śalya
(Sañjaya continued)
said these harsh words
praising the enemy,
and foe-crushing Karṇa,
leader of the army
of the Kauravas,
was infuriated.
He said:

42 "Let it be!
Let it be!
Enough is enough!
It's clear now,
is it not,
the clash between
Arjuna and me?
Spout your sweet
Talk of Arjuna
only after he
defeats me in battle."

43 The rājā of Madra
Śalya said:
"So I will."
And kept silent.
Battle-eager-Karṇa
Ordered:
"Drive me to the field."

44 The Śalya-driven
Massive white-horsed chariot
Sped forward
To scatter enemies
Like Savitā the Sun
Scattering darkness.

45 Karṇa sat smiling
In that tiger-skin-covered
White-horse-yoked chariot.
He saw in the distance
The Pāṇḍava army
And enquired
About Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 Sañjaya continued:
After inspiring your army
with his readiness for battle,
Karṇa addressed each and every Pāṇḍava soldier:

2 "Whoever among you
Can point out to me
Where mahā-ātmaned
White-horsed Arjuna is,
Gets from me
Whatever wealth he wants.

3 If he wants more, I will give him more.
Whoever can tell me
Where Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is,
Gets from me a cart-load of jewels.

4 And if he who
Informs about Arjuna
Think that is not enough,
I will give him
A hundred milch cows
And a hundred brass milk-vessels.

5 Not just that –
A hundred flourishing villages
And a chariot
Pulled by white mules
Go to the soldier
Who informs me about Arjuna,
Along with

6 A bevy of black-haired girls
To the informer
About Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
If even that does not satisfy
The Arjuna-informer,

7 He gets from me
A second, golden chariot
Pulled by six elephant-sized bulls,
And a hundred
Excellently ornamented girls,

8 *Śyāmās,*
Sixteen-years-old virgins
Wearing golden necklaces,
Experts in singing and dancing.
And if even that fails to content
The Arjuna-informer

9 I will add
A hundred elephants
A hundred villages
A hundred Chariots
    made of gold
Ten thousand excellent horses

10 Of the finest pedigree
Healthy and docile
And trained expertly
    to pull chariots.
Four hundred milk-producing
Gold-horned cows,

11 Each with a calf,
Will I give
To anyone who informs me
About Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
If all this fails to satisfy
The Arjuna-informer,

12 He will get even more
Precious gifts:
Five hundred while horses
Decorated
With golden trappings
And scintillating gems.

13 And more:
Eighteen horses
Specially trained
For the chariot,
And a dazzling
Golden chariot,
Excellently equipped,

14 Pulled by horses
Of Kāmboja pedigree,
Goes to he who informs me
About Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
And if this does not make
The Arjuna-informer happy,

15 I will give him
Six hundred elephants,
All gold-caparisoned,
Gold-garlanded,
Variously decorated,

16 Who come
From the western territories,
Who are docile
And trained
In elephant-skills.
And should all this
Fail to satisfy
The Arjuna-informer,

17 There is more:
Fourteen villages
    of prosperous Vaiśyas
With plentiful water
    and forests nearby –
Villages overflowing
    with rājā-like luxuries.

18 The Arjuna-informer
Will get from me
A hundred gold-necklaced *dāsī*
Slave-girls of Magadha.

19 And if
The Arjuna-informer
Finds that insufficient,
Then let him ask,
And he will receive

20 My son
My wife
My house –
Whatever pleases him:
He has only to ask.

21 Whoever tells me
About Keśava-Krishna
And Arjuna
Gets all their wealth
After I have killed them."

22 Karṇa
Kept repeating his offer
Again and again
On the battlefield
And then he blew
On his sweet-sounding
Sea-born conch.

23 Mahārāja!
The words of Sūtaputra
Son-of-a-charioteer
Karṇa
Delighted the hearts
Of Duryodhana
And his followers.

24 Then the *dundubhi*-drums
Sounded, and the *mṛdaṅga*-
Drums, and the cacophony
Of many musicians,
And lion-roars of soldiers,
And trumpetings of elephants.

25 O bull-brave rājā!
Inspired and excited,
The soldiers
Shouted their war-cries.

26 To the mahā- chariot-hero Karṇa,
The foe-destroying son of Rādhā,
As he advanced joyfully
Declaring his greatness,
The Madra-rājā Śalya
Scornfully said:

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 "No need, charioteer's son,
To give away an elephant-sized
Six-bull-pulled golden chariot.
You will see Arjuna today.

2 Son of Radhā! Karṇa!
You are a fool
Scattering your wealth
As if you were Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera!
Without any effort
You will see Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

3 It is foolish
To treat wealth as if
It has no value.
Can't you see the blame
In giving away wealth
To the undeserving?

4 Think of the many yajñas
You could perform
With all this wealth!
O charioteer!
Go in for yajñas instead.

5 And this stupid hope
You have of killing
Pārtha-Arjuna and Krishna –
It's utterly futile!
Since when has a jackal
Killed two lions?

6 You want to do
What no one's ever done.
And it seems you have no friends
To stop you from
Leaping into fire.

7 You can't tell
What to do
From what not to do.
You are ripe for the clutches of Kāla,
Else why should a man
Who wants to live
Babble such unlistenable words?

8 You are like a man
Who ties a stone
    round his neck
And then tries to swim
    across a river.
You are like a man
    who wants to jump
    from a mountain.

9 If you have any idea
What's good for you,
Take my advice
And from the safety
Of your army formation
Fight Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

10 I don't mean *you* well
When I say this.
All I want is the good of Duryodhana.
If you value your life, listen to me."

11 Karṇa said: "I will fight Pārtha-Arjuna
Because I have faith
In the strength of my arms.
Why are you trying to frighten me?
You are my enemy
In the guise of a friend.

12 No one today
Can make me change my mind,
Not even Indra
Brandishing his thunderbolt.
Certainly no mortal."

13 As soon as Karṇa finished
(continued Sañjaya)
The Madra-rājā Śalya,
To provoke him to further anger,
Said to Karṇa:

14 "When the *kaṅka*-feathered
sharp arrows speed
from the skilful hands
of Phālguna-Arjuna
and pierce your body
effortlessly,
then you will repent
your insistent asking
to confront Arjuna.

15 O son
of a charioteer!
When Pārtha-Arjuna,
Savyasācī-Arjuna,
the ambidexterous archer,
scorches the ranks
Of his enemies
with sharp arrows
from his celestial bow –
then will you repent
the deed you have planned.

16 Like a baby
in the lap
of its mother
longing to clutch
the moon
in its hands
are you seeking
to defeat Arjuna
in his chariot.

17 O Karṇa!
The valour
of Arjuna
is like
a needle-
sharp trident.
To decide
to battle
with Arjuna
Is like shredding yourself
With that trident.

18 O son
of a charioteer!
You challenging
to battle
is like a child
or a dolt
or a fool-
hardy deer
challenging
a massive, tawny-
maned lion.

19 Stop challenging
the valiant
prince Arjuna!
Like an over-
fed jackal
confronting a mahā-
powerful lion,
you will perish,
O charioteer's son

20 Karṇa!
You challenging Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is like a rabbit
Challenging a musth elephant
Whose tusks are as large as ploughshares.

21 You are foolish.
You fight Pārtha-Arjuna!
It's like a man
Attacking a mahā-venomous
Black snake in its hole
With a wooden stick.

22 You are a fool, Karṇa.
Angrily you scream
At that lion-among-men
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
Like a jackal howling at a lion.

23 Karṇa!
You challenging Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is like a snake
Seeking its own doom
By attacking the bird-lord
Vinatā's son Garuḍa.

24 At the rising
    of the moon
You want to cross
    with your bare hands
The fiercely-billowing
    animal-teeming ocean!

25 Karṇa! You challenging
Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is like a calf
Attacking a sharp-horned bull
Who has a neck like a *dundubhi*-drum.

26 This man Arjuna
Is like Parjanya-Indra
The rain-showering god.
You screaming at him
Is like the croaking
    of a frog
At a mahā-fearful
    mahā-cloud.

27 Karṇa!
You challenging
The tiger-among-men
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is like a pet dog
Barking at a forest-lion.

28 Karṇa!
A jackal who lives with rabbits
Thinks he is a lion
Until such time as he faces a lion.

29 Son of Rādhā! Rādheya-Karṇa!
You are a lion only
Because you have not faced
Foe-annihilating
Lion-among-men
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

30 Carry on thinking
That you are a lion –
Until you see
Krishna and Arjuna
Resplendent in their chariot
Like the sun and the moon.

31 Carry on saying
Whatever you like –
For you
    have not heard
The twang
    of the Gāṇḍīva
    in the mahā-battle.

32 For when you hear
the twang of the bow
and the rattle
of the chariot
and Arjuna
roaring like a lion –
then you will
turn into a jackal.

33 You fool!
You were always
a jackal,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna always
a lion.
You are a jackal
because you hate heroes.

34 Strong and weak –
Cat and mouse
Tiger and dog
Lion and jackal
Elephant and rabbit

35 Truth and untruth
Amṛta and poison –
So in your karma
Are Pārtha-Arjuna and you."

SECTION FORTY

1 Sañjaya continued:
Thus was Rādhā's son Karṇa belittled
By infinitely energetic Śalya.
Infuriated, he thought:
"Śalya" means "arrow".
So he retaliated.

2 "Śalya," said Karṇa,
"Only the worthy respect the worthy.
You are worthless.
What do you know of worthy and unworthy?

3 Śalya!
I am fully aware
Of the mahā-weapons of Arjuna
His wrath
His valour
His bow
His arrows
I am fully aware of the prowess
Of that mahā-ātmaned hero.

4 Śalya!
Let me tell you:
You do not know
As well as I do
The bull-brave glory
    of Krishna
Who is
    the lord
        of earth-lords.

5 I know
    my own valour
And I know the valour
    of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
I know he wields
    the Gāṇḍīva bow.
yet I dare
    to challenge him.

6 Śalya! I have
    this lovely-feathered
    blood-sucking arrow.
Plumed and sleek and ornamented
It fills an entire quiver.

7 Sandalpaste-polished
It has received my pūjā
    over many years.
Snake-shaped and venomous,
It can kill whole crowds
Of men and horses and elephants.

8 It is
dreadful-shaped
mahā-vicious
armour-piercing
bone-shredding
If I am angered
I can
with this arrow
pulverise
the mahā-mountain Meru.

9 Listen to me for I speak the truth!
This arrow I have reserved
For Devakī's son Krishna
Or Phālguna-Arjuna
None else.

10 Śalya! With this arrow
I shall fight Vāsudeva-Krishna
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna –
A deed worthy of me.

11 All the Lakṣmī-prosperity
Of the heroes
Of the Vṛṣṇi race
Is concentrated in Krishna.
The victory
Of all the sons of Pāṇḍu
Depends on Pārtha-Arjuna.

12 Which hero will reject a battle
Where both are present?
Two lions-among-men
Sitting in one chariot,

13 Choosing a single me
To attack! O Śalya,
Blessed is my birth!
The so-far undefeated
Aunt's son and maternal uncle's son –

14 Watch me kill them –
These two pearls
Threaded in a string.
Arjuna has the Gāṇḍīva,
Krishna the *cakra.*
One has the monkey-symbol
on his flag,
The other's symbol is
Tārkṣya-Garuḍa.

15 Śalya!
Others are afraid of them,
I am enhanced by them.
You are a fool,
an ill deed doer.
You do not know the ways
of a mahā-war.

16 Fear makes you
rave and rant.
Some selfish motive makes you
praise these two.

17 Ill-born Kṣatriya scoundrel
Of a criminal country!
First I'll kill those two,
And then I will kill
You and your kith and kin.

18 Why do you pretend
to be my friend
When all you do is try
to make me afraid
Of Krishna and Arjuna?
Today
either they kill me
or I kill them.

19 I know my strength.
I do not fear these two.
A thousand Vāsudeva-Krishnas
And a hundred Phālguna-Arjunas

20 Will I kill today
Singlehanded,
You criminal-country-born wretch!
So shut up!
Women
Children
Elders
People playing games

21 And even studious people –
The stories they tell
About the wicked-ātmaned citizens of Madra –
Listen to these stories from me, O Śalya –

22 Stories which were told by Brahmins
In the courts of rājās.
Then, you fool, be silent,
Or reply, if you so wish.

23 The people of Madra
hate their friends.
The one who hates us
comes from Madra.
Vile is the speech
of a Madra.
No Madra wishes well
of others.

24 Always
wicked-ātmaned
Always
lying
Always
devious –
I have heard
a Madra
remains
wicked-ātmaned
Till the hour
of his death.

25 Father
Son
Mother-in-law
Father-in-law
Maternal uncle
Son-in-law
Daughter
Brother
Grandson
Other relatives

26 Visitors
Guests
Female slaves
Male slaves –
They mix promiscuously.
Women mix freely
With men
Known and unknown.

27 In their homes
They subsist
On coarse barley
They eat fish
They drink *sīdhu*-wine
They eat cow-meat
And they cry
And they laugh

28 And they sing
And they talk
    wildly
And indulge in
    lustful kāma.
So obsessed are they
    with the pleasures
    of kāma
They have no time
    for the practice
    of dharma.

29 The Madras
Are lost in a welter
Of impure karma.
Never be enemies
with a Madra,
Never be friends
with a Madra.

30 Togetherness
has no meaning
for a Madra,
A Madra is always suspicious.
Like trust wasted on a Madra,
Purity on a Gāndhāra,

31 Like a ritual wasted
when a rājā becomes priest,
Like a Brahmin corrupted
performing a Śūdra's *saṁskāras,*

32 Like a Brahmin-hater
Always condemned,
So joining hands with a Madra
Is to invite your own doom.

33 No friendship
Is possible with a Madra.
'I neutralise your poison,
O scorpion!
With this mantra
Of the Atharva-Veda
I make peace for myself.'

34 These are the words
Used by the wise
To neutralise the poison
In a scorpion-bitten man.
This is the truth.

35 O learned one!
Listen to me and keep silent,
For I have more to say.
Women who get drunk –
They strip and dance

36 And start having sex
And don't know when to stop.
How can the son
Of such a woman
Advise others
On what is dharma?

37 These women urinate
Like she-camels
And she-asses.
They are devoid of dharma
They are utterly shameless.

38 You being the son
of such a woman,
How can you even think
of teaching me dharma?
If a man asks
a Madra woman,
'Give me some
suvīraka-wine,'
She will scratch
her thigh,

39 And unwilling
to give the wine,
Say harshly,
'No, no,
don't ask me –
I love this wine.

40 Take my husband, my son,
But not the wine.'
Madra women are fair-skinned,
Large, shameless, hairy,

41 Gluttonous and unchaste –
So I have heard.
Not just me –
Many others say
The same about them –

42 From the top
of their head
To the tips
of their toe-nails
Whatever they do
is crooked.
The Madras
and Sindhu-Sāuviras
Know nothing
of dharma.

43 These *mlecchas*
of criminal countries
are devoid of dharma.
I have heard
that a Kṣatriya's supreme dharma

44 Is to go and die on the battlefield
And receive the pūjā of noble people.
To lay down my life on the field of battle –

45 I have decided
on that,
For that will get me heaven
when I die.
I am the *sakhā*
the loved-and-loving friend
of intelligent Duryodhana.

46 My wealth, all I have,
my life-*prāṇa* are in his hands.
But you, Śalya,
You criminal-country-character,
Bribed by the Pāṇḍavas

47 You treat us
As if we and not they
Are your enemies!
A hundred characters
like you
Cannot swerve me away

48 From the battlefield,
Just as
a hundred atheists
Cannot weaken
the faith
Of a man
who knows dharma.
You can cry and die
like a deer
stricken by the summer sun –

49 I am a Kṣatriya –
You cannot frighten me.
The tigers-among-men
Who gave up their lives

50 And attained
the highest goal
And whom
my guru Paraśurāma
praised in the past –
I remember them always.
To save the Kauravas
and kill their enemies –

51 Keep in mind:
This is my mission.
I will follow
the perfect example
set by
rājā Pururavas.
King of the Madras!
I see no one

52 In the three worlds
Who can change my mind.
I cannot be shaken.
I have determined.

53 Learned Śalya!
Realise this –
And keep silent.
Fear makes you talk too much.
You Madra wretch!
I could kill you
And throw your body
To flesh-eating beasts.

54 Corrupt-country-born Śalya!
If ever
You speak again like this,
I'll smash your head
With my hard-as-a-thunderbolt mace!

55 Rājā of Madra!
All will see or hear today
Krishna and Arjuna have killed Karṇa,
Or Karṇa has killed Krishna and Arjuna."

56 Ruler of the earth!
Rādhā's son again
Confidently urged
The rājā of Madra:
"Drive!
Drive on!"

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 O respectworthy monarch!
(continued Sañjaya)
Adhiratha's son
Delighting-in-battle Karṇa
Was heard out by Śalya
Who added his opinion.

2 "I was born in a dynasty
Of never-retreating-in-battle
Head-consecrated rājās.
I am always dedicated to dharma.

3 You, O bull-strong Karṇa,
You talk like a drunk.
But I mean you well,
So I will do my best to cure you.

4 Low-born Karṇa!
Listen to a fable
about a crow.
Listen to it well,
Then do as you like.

5 Mahā-muscled Karṇa!
I cannot think of any wrong
I have done so terrible
That you should kill me.

6 I wish rājā Duryodhana well.
I am your charioteer.
I am constrained to say
What is good for you
And what is not good.

7 What helps,
What harms;
A chariot-hero's strength,
A chariot-hero's weakness;
The problems faced
By a chariot-hero
with his horses;

8 Knowledge of weapons;
Victory-cries
And defeat-cries
Of birds and beasts;
Loads
And over-loads of horses;
Treatment of arrow-wounds;

9 Weapons-yoga;
Modes of combat;
Signs and omens –
All this I know
For I am thoroughly familiar
With this chariot.

10 Karṇa!
I say this again –
Let me give you
this fable.
On a seashore
There lived this
rolling-in-wealth Vaiśya.

11 Yajñas
Donations
Gentle behaviour
Careful in caste-karma
Many sons
Loving family man
Kind to all creatures –

12 He lived happy and fearless
In the kingdom
Of a rājā devoted to dharma.
He had these wonderful
very well-behaved
very small sons.

13 And there was
this Crow
Who lived off
the defiled leftovers
of the children's meals.
The little children
of the Vaiśya
fed the Crow

14 Meat
Rice
Curd
Milk
Sweet *kṣīra*
Honey
Butter.
Glutted with the leftovers
Of the children,
This Crow
Thinking no end of himself

15 Decided that all birds –
His equals
And his superiors –
Were less than himself.
Now it so happened
To that very seashore
Came some swans

16 As swift-flying as Garuḍa –
Very cheerful birds,
With *cakra*-marks
    on their bodies.
Seeing the swans,
The children said to the Crow:

17 'Sky-flier!
Of birds you are the best.'
Flattered
By the words
Of the silly children,

18 That foolish proud crow
Thought their words
To be so true.
And then he wondered:
Who among all these swans
Is the best swan?

19 Such was the pride
Of the crow who lived off
Leftover pickings.
So he flew to the flock
Of far-flying swans
To find
The finest of them all,

20 And that fool
of a Crow
Said: 'Come! Let's fly!'
They giggled,
All the swans
Who had come there,

21 These powerful birds,
Far-ranging fliers
With auspicious *cakra*-marks
on their bodies,
When they heard the crow
Cawing out his challenge.

22 The Swans said:
'We are the swans
Of the Mānasarovara Lake.
We fly the world over.
Because we are
the far-flying birds,
All birds offer us pūjā.

23 Crow!
Aren't you foolish?
How can you even think
Of challenging
A *cakra*-marked
Far-flying Swan
To fly with you?

24 Anyway,
Do tell us, Crow,
How do you plan
To fly with us?'
Hearing this,
The foolish big-mouthed Crow,
True to the nature
Of the Crow species,
Let loose a volley of abuse
On the Swans, saying:

25 'All said and done,
I can fly
In the sky
In a hundred and one
Patterns of flying.
I'm not lying!
Each flight is right!
It's vivid, it's bright!
Each flight, if I'm not wrong,
Is a hundred-*yojanas* long.

26 *Uḍḍina*
flying high
Avaḍīna
flying low
Praḍīna
whirling around
Ḍīna
flying so-so
Niḍīna
flying slow
Saṁḍīna
flying gently
Tiryagḍīna
flying swiftly

27 *Viḍīna*
flying copycat
Pariḍīna
flying everywhere
Parāḍīna
flying backwards
Suḍīna
flying heaven-ward
Abhiḍīna
flying straight ahead
Mahāḍīna
flying mahā-fast
Niḍīna
glide-flying
Atiḍīna
flying wild

28 *Avaḍīna*
flying straight down
Praḍīna
flying straight up
Saṃḍīna ḍīna-ḍīna
flying in circles
up above
and then
drifting
gently down
Saṃḍīnoḍḍinadina
spiralling
Ḍīnaviḍīna
trick-flying

29 *Sampāta*
lyrical flying
with fast wing-flapping
Samudīpa
flying alternately
up and down
Vyatiriktaka
flying
to a fixed goal –
All these flights are
gata
āgata
pratigata
flying to
flying to and back
flying free . . .

30 Watch me fly
In the sky
So high.
All these I know.
Watch me show
The way to go!

31 Swans!
You tell me
Which wizardry
You wish to see.
Verily
Merrily
Fly with me

32 Variously
In the sky so free
With no guarantee
Of your safety.'
Hearing this,
One swan cackled
And laughed and said

33 To the Crow these words
Which I repeat to you.
Son of Rādhā, Karṇa,
Listen.
The Swan said:
'Crow! What fun!
You've certainly done
A hundred and one
Flights under the sun!

34 But I must confess
My knowledge is less.
O Crow!
I only know
One way to fly –
The way all birds fly.

35 O red-eyed one!
Who am I
To teach you to fly?'
All the Crows there
Laughed and confabulated.

36 'Silly Swan!
To think one kind of flying
Is better than a hundred and one!
A solo flight will do
For the Crow to show
The Swan how to fly,

37 For the Crow is strong and swift.'
So the Crow and the Swan
Swooped up into the sky.

38 Swan from this side,
Crow from the other.
The Swan knew
One kind of flying,
The Crow knew a hundred.

39 What fun for the Crow
Coursing through the sky
In every which way!
Spellbound they watched
His varied acrobatics –

40 All the other crows –
And delighted they broke
Into a cacophony of caw-caw-caw.
They cackled
And said ugly things about swans

41 Every now and then,
Every chance they got.
They flapped
and they fluttered
up trees,
and they flapped and fluttered
down trees,

42 Flurrying
and scurrying
and singing
the praises of the Crow.
'Victory! Victory!'
With a graceful sweep
The Swan soared high.

43 O lord of the earth!
For a moment it seemed
The Crow had won,
The Swan had lost.
And the crows
Marked the swans, saying:

44 'You fly so high
But choose to lose,
You silly goose!'
The soaring Swan
Heard these words
Of the crows

45 And flew westwards
Over the *makara*-filled ocean.
In the meantime,
The Crow had tired
And was now worried

46 For he could see
No island or tree
Where he could rest.
He thought:
So much water everywhere!
Where will I rest?

47 *What a wonderful*
and varied
world of water!
What a mahā-reservoir
of watery creatures!
So vast –
it looks even vaster
than the sky!

48 O Karṇa! Son of a charioteer!
Seafarers know
How deep and vast
Is the sky-vast ocean.

49 Tell me, Karṇa,
How will the poor Crow
Ever know
The vastness of the ocean?
And the Swan
Speeding ahead
Quickly enough

50 Kept looking back
And had to slow down.
Outstripping
The fancy-flying Crow,
The Swan paused
and waited, thinking:

51 *Will I ever get*
to see
the poor Crow?
Tired and panting
the Crow came up
to the Swan.

52 Seeing him
exhausted
and sinking,
The Swan recalled
what good people do,
and said:

53 'Many many things
you said on
the many many ways
of flying –
remember?
but you forgot
the one simple secret of flying.

54 Tell me, Crow,
and tell me true:
What is the name
of this flying you do?
Tell me true,
and tell me plain:
The name of the flying
when again and again
Wings and beak
touch the watery main.

55 Of all the flights
you've told me true,
What is the name
of this flying you do?
Up and down
and backside too –
What is the name
of this flying you do?
Corvus, Sir,
I wait for you.' "

56 Śalya continued:
"Wicked-ātmaned Karṇa!
The Swan saw the Crow
Tired out,
Back and both wings brushing
the ocean waves,

57 With no idea of
The vastness of the ocean,
On the verge of collapse,
On the verge of slipping
in the waters.
That was when the Crow
Said to the Swan:

58 'Swan! I'm a crow.
I caw-caw-caw.
What do I know
of flying?
Take me to the safety
of the shore.'

59 Poor Crow!
No sooner had he said this
Than, utterly worn out,
Beak and wings
brushing the waves,
All of a sudden
He plummeted in the ocean.

60 Feeling sorry for him
As he disappeared in the waters
About to perish,
The Swan said to the Crow:

61 'Didn't you say, Crow,
You could fly
A hundred and one ways?
You were proud of that,
were you not?
Or don't you remember?

62 O lord
Of a hundred ways
Of flying!
Of my superior!
How can you tire and fall
in the mahā-ocean?'

63 The poor pathetic
Suffering-in-the-sea Crow
Looked up at the Swan
And to please him said:

64 'Swan! Fattened
By leftover pickings,
I let pride
go to my head.
Thinking I was Suparṇa-Garuḍa,
I mocked
Crows and other birds.

65 O save me, Swan! Save me!
Take me to an island!
O powerful Swan!
O lordly Swan!
Safe in my country,

66 I promise
never again
to mock anyone!
O pluck me
From this calamity!
Even as he moaned,
Dizzy, only half-conscious,

67 Caw-caw-cawing in despair,
The Crow started sliding
into the mahā-ocean.
It hurt to look at him.
Moved by pity, the Swan

68 Swooped low
And with his claws
Swiftly scooped the Crow
out of the waters
And gently placed him
on his back.
With the dazed crow on his back,
The Swan speedily

69 Flew back to the island
From where they had started.
Depositing
The sky-ranging Crow there
And comforting him,

70 The Swan
With speed as swift as the mind
Returned to the place
Which was dear to his heart.

71 As for the Crow,
Karṇa,
Whose pride was fattened
By leftover pickings,
Defeated by the Swan
He gave up boasting of his prowess,
And found peace.
Like this Crow fattened
On the Vaiśyas' leftovers,

72 Believe me,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
Have fed you leftovers –
And you mock
Your equals and your superiors!

73 Droṇa, Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa,
Bhīṣma and other Kauravas
Helped you in Virāṭa.
Arjuna was all alone.
Why couldn't you kill him then?

74 Fighting all of you
one by one
and all together,
Diadem-decked
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
routed you
like a lion scattering
a pack of jackals.
What happened
to your valour then?

75 And when your brother
was killed
by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
on the field
of battle
in the presence
of all the Kauravas,
you, Karṇa,
were the first to flee.

76 And when Arjuna,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
defeated in battle
the Gandharvas
led by Citrasena
and freed Duryodhana
and the ladies –

77 In the forest of Dvaita
When the Gandharvas attacked –
It was you, Karṇa,
who abandoned the Kauravas
and fled the field.

78 Remember the time,
Karṇa,
in the royal sabhā
of the Kauravas,
when Paraśurāma praised
Pārtha-Arjuna and Keśava-Krishna?

[VIII:41:79-84]

Transcreated by P. Lal

79 You have heard Droṇa and Bhīṣma
On many occasions
Speak to assemblies of kings.
They have always said
Krishna and Arjuna
Cannot be killed.

80 How can I list all the ways
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna is superior to you,
Just as a Brahmin
Is superior to all creatures.

81 Soon enough
You will see Vāsudeva-Krishna
And Kuntī's son Arjuna
Ensconced
In their magnificent chariot.

82 Seek the favour
of Vārṣṇeya-Krishna
Seek the favour
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Like the Crow
who was wise enough
to seek the favour
of the Swan.

83 I tell you, Karṇa:
When you see Vasudeva-Krishna
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
In one chariot,
You will not speak
They way you do now.

84 When the hundreds
Of arrows of Pārtha-Arjuna
Destroy your pride,
You will see the difference
Between you and Arjuna.

85 Don't be the firefly
that mocks
the splendour of the sun
the radiance of the moon.
Don't mock these two
for they
are the finest
of men
and their glory
is known
in the realms
of the gods
and the anti-gods
and humans.

86 Like the sun and the moon
Are Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna – radiant!
And you:
You are only
a flickering firefly.

87 Son of a charioteer!
Do not make fun
Of Acyuta-Krishna and Arjuna.
They are a mahā-ātmaned
Lions-among-men pair.
Stop boasting.
Keep silent."

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 Sañjaya continued:
Displeased
By the harsh words
Of the rājā of Madra Śalya
Adhiratha's son
Mahātmā Karṇa said:
"I know all about
Vāsudeva-Krishna and Arjuna.

2 I know all about
The chariot-skill
Of Śauri-Krishna.
I know all about
The mahā-weapons
Of Pāṇḍava Arjuna
It is you, Śalya,
Who are ignorant
About these things.

3 Yes, Krishna and his clone
Know a great deal
About weapons.
Yet I will fight them fearlessly.
What troubles me
Is the curse on me
Placed in the past by Paraśurāma –
A brilliant Brahmin's curse.

4 A long time ago,
Disguised as a Brahmin,
I stayed with Paraśurāma
Because I wanted
To learn the secrets
Of celestial weapons.
That was the time
When the rājā-of-the-gods Indra,
Eager to help Phālguna-Arjuna,
Tricked me, Śalya,

5 By assuming the form
Of a hideous worm
And piercing my thigh
While I was unaware
And boring right through
Till blood oozed out –
And my guru Paraśurāma
Was asleep at the time
With his head on my thigh.

6 The wound was deep
And blood trickled out,
A mahā-stream of it.
But I steeled myself
And did not stir,
For I was afraid
Of waking my guru.
At last
He opened his eyes
And saw what had happened.

7 Śalya!
Impressed by my patience
He said:
'You are not a Brahmin.
Tell me the truth:
Who are you?'
I told him who I was.
'I am a Sūta, a charioteer.'

8 Paraśurāma
Of mahā-tapasyā
Was so incensed
By my deceit
That he cursed me:
'Sūta! You tricked me into
Giving you this weapon.
In your hour of need
This weapon will fail you.

9 At the time
    of your dying
This weapon
    will fail you.
At other times
    it will work.
This Brahma-weapon is not
    for non-Brahmins.'
It will be useful
    in today's fearful battle.

10 Śalya!
This descendant
Of the Bharata dynasty,
This fearful
Powerful foe-exterminator –
I am sure
He will today
Pounce upon
The great Kṣatriya heroes
And terrorise them.

11 Śalya!
I promise you:
Today I will thrust
Into the mouth of death
The incomparable
Swift and fierce
Impossible-to-repulse
Vow-fulfilling Pāṇḍava
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

12 Apart
        from the Brāhma
I have with me
        another missile
with which I will
        decimate my enemies
and kill
        the famed and valiant
limitlessly lustrous
        cruel and brave
fearless foe-facing
        Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

13 The boundless ocean!
Lord of all waters!
The mahā-dynamic ocean!
How it tries to swallow
And drown many creatures!
Yet even this ocean of boundless force
Is blocked by the shore.

22 Today I will meet him
One to one
On the field of battle –
This hero who knows
All the chariot-manoeuvres,
This paragon of
All the world's archers,
This dauntless
All-combating warrior
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

23 There is no man in the world
I think is his equal in bowmanship.
He is the one
Who has the whole world
In his hands.
On the battlefield today
I shall meet him
Face to face.

24 That ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
Who routed the gods
And all others
In the Khāṇḍava forest –
Which man is there except me
Who values his life
Who will dare fight
Such a hero?

25 White-horsed Arjuna!
So arrogant!
So skilled in weapons!
Such dexterity!
Such celestial missiles!
Such a foe-crusher!
With sharp arrows
I will slice
This chariot-hero's head
From his body.

26 Śalya!
Today for me
It's death or victory.
Thus I fight Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
There is none else
Who will dare
Chariot-combat
With Indra-powerful Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

27 And I will praise
The glory of Arjuna
To all the Kṣatriyas
On the battlefield.
You are a fool!
It's foolish of you
To speak to me
Of the magnificence
Of Phālguna-Arjuna.

28 That ugly-minded,
Cruel, mean
And unforgiving man
Who finds fault
With a forgiving person –
I can kill
A hundred such.
But *kāla*-yoga
The need of the time
Prevents me –
So I forgive you.

29 You ill deed doer! You fool!
Siding with Arjuna,
You made fun of me.
Me, the innocent one!
You back-stabber!
One needs to take
Seven steps with a man
To become his friend.

14 As I today
On the field of battle
Will fight and block
Kuntī's son Arjuna
Who shoots countless
lovely-feathered
flesh-shreddin garrows
that massacre heroes
The twang of whose bow
reverberates the loudest
in this world.

15 Pārtha-Arjuna is
incredibly powerful
mahā-arms-expert
ocean-magnificent
drowner of kings
with waves of arrows.
I will be the shore
and with my arrows
I will block Arjuna.

16 See me today
As I clash on the field
With a man who I think
Has no equal –
Who bow in hand
Defeats gods and anti-gods
In battle.

17 This Pāṇḍava is arrogant –
Very much so.
With his mahā-weapons
Of celestial calibre
He will challenge me.
I will neutralise
His weapons with mine,
And I will kill Pārtha-Arjuna.

18 This Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Who is like
The thousand-rayed sun
Scorching the directions
With fiery radiance –
I with my arrows
Will shroud that dazzle
Like clouds covering
The dark-dispelling sun.

19 Like clouds
at the day
of dissolution
Smothering
the many-branching flames
of the doomsday fire,
With my rain-like arrows
I will extinguish
the Agni-conflagration
called Pārtha-Arjuna.

20 Which my *bhalla*-arrows
I will tame in battle
Kuntī's son Arjuna
Who is a horrendous
Sharp-fanged
Venomous snake
With limitless
Indomitable energy
Effulgent in the fire of his anger.

21 Today I will be
The Himavant mountain
And bring
To a standstill
The tree-uprooting
Fiercely powerful
Carnage-creating
Intolerant
Mātariśvān-wind
Called Arjuna.

30 A calamitous time has come upon us.
Duryodhana has arrived on the battlefield.
I wish him well in every way,
But your behaviour
Suggests you do not
Want his victory.

31 *Mitra* means friend.
The word *mitra*
Is compounded of
mid
meaning affection
nanda
meaning joy
prī
meaning pleasing
trā
meaning protecting
mi or *mud*
meaning merriment.
I have all
these qualities.
Rājā Duryodhana
knows this well.

32 *Śatru* means enemy.
The word *śatru*
Is compounded of
śad
meaning slicing
śās
meaning authority
śo
meaning belittling
śvas or *ṣad*
meaning destroying.
You have these qualities
And your behaviour
With me proves it.

33 I will fight Pāṇḍava Arjuna
And Vāsudeva-Krishna
To benefit Duryodhana,
To please you,
To achieve glory,
To fulfil myself,
To honour Īśvara.
Watch my feats today!

34 Watch my
    Brāhma-missile
    my celestial weapons
    my human weapons!
With these weapons
I will clash with Arjuna
The formidable hero
Like a musth elephant
Clashing with another musth elephant.

35 With my mind
Fully concentrated,
I will hurl that weapon
At Arjuna today.
And he will surely die,
Unless my chariot wheel
Gets stuck in the slush
Of the battlefield.

36 Let Vaivasvata-Yama come
    with his rod!
Let Varuṇa come
    with his noose!
Let Dhanapati-Kubera come
    with his mace!
Let Vāsava-Indra come
    with his thun-derbolt!

37 Let other enemies come!
I fear none!
I do not fear Pārtha-Arjuna
Nor Janārdana-Krishna.

38 I shall fight both
On the battlefield!
O king!
It so happened once
I was practising archery
Near the dwelling
Of a Brahmin named Vijaya,

39 And unknowingly
With a fierce arrow
I killed
The *homa-dhenu* calf
Of that Brahmin.

40 Śalya! I was alone.
The Brahmin saw me.
He said, 'You have killed
My *homa-dhenu* calf pointlessly.

41 So, on the battlefield
Your chariot-wheel
Will sink in the mud,
And great fear overcome you.'

42 I am afraid
Of that Brahmin's curse.
His king is Somarāja
Of the lunar dynasty,
And he can dispense
Joy or sorrow as he pleases.

43 Śalya, I offered him
A thousand cows
And six hundred bulls,
But all that generosity
Failed to please him.

44 Seven hundred elephants
With trunks as huge as ploughs,
And hundreds of male slaves
And female slaves
Failed to please that Brahmin.

45 Fourteen thousand black cows
Each with a white calf –
And still that excellent
Brahmin was not pleased.

46 A mansion to delight
Every craving for pleasure,
And all the wealth I had –
And he refused them all.

47 Not only that –
I begged his forgiveness,
I implored him.
All he had to say was,
'Sūta! What I say,
Will come to pass.
There is no escape.

48 When lies are spoken,
The people perish.
I do not want the crime
Of untruth on me.
No untruth – for Dharma's sake.

49 You destroyed a Brahmin's livelihood.
You have repented.
My words cannot be retracted.
What will happen, will happen.'

50 You have criticised me
harshly.
My friendship with you
Makes me speak openly
with you.
I know you will not stop
belittling me.
But be silent for now
And listen to what I say."

SECTION FORTY-THREE

Sañjaya said:
1 Mahārāja! Rādhā's son
with these words
silenced the Madra-rājā Śalya
and said to him:

2 "Śalya! All the stories
you have prattled off
to frighten me from battle –
they don't frighten me.

3 Who's Keśava-Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna?
If all the gods led
by Vāsava-Indra come to fight me,
I am not frightened.

4 Words don't frighten me.
If you want to find
a person to frighten me, go,
find someone else.

5 You are mean-minded.
Your strength lies in hurling abuse.
Because you can't speak good of me,
must you speak evil?

6 Listen, Madraka! Karṇa was not born
to fear a battle.
I was born for valour, I was born
to achieve glory.

7 I am letting you live, Śalya,
for three reasons:
as my charioteer you have become
my *sakhā*-friend;
I have known you long
and you are close to me;
and you happen to be an ally
of my friend Duryodhana.

8 A great mission has to be accomplished
for rājā Duryodhana.
This I must do for him –
and so I let you live.

9 Besides, you will recall that I
promised to forgive you all –
all your abuse. I'll rout my enemies
even without a thousand Śalyas.
Besides, killing a friend is a crime –
and so you live."

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 "You rave and rant, Karṇa,"
replied Śalya. "Listen:
even without a thousand Karṇas,
I can defeat my enemies."

2 To these bitter words
of the king of Madra, Śalya,
Karṇa retorted with words
twice as bitter.

3 "Lord of Madra", said Karṇa,
"Listen carefully to what I heard once
to what was said in the very presence
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself.

4 In the palace of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
many Brahmins narrated
stories about ancient kings
and their kingdoms.

5 One of these excellent Brahmins.
came out with a *kathā*
not very kind about the Bāhīkas
and the Madras.

6 'The territory that lies beyond
the Himālayas, the Gaṅgā,
the Sarasvatī, the Yamunā,
and Kurukṣetra,

7 The five rivers – Satalaja, Vyāsa,
Rāvī, Cenaba, Jhelama –
and the Sindhu, is Bāhīka.
It is impure, and without dharma.

8 I remember, from my childhood days,
a banyan called Govardhana
and a watering-place called Subhadra
outside the palace gates.

9 I was in Bāhīka
on a secret mission,
and I got to know well
the ways of the Bāhīkans.

10 There is a town called Śākala
and a river Apaga
where a clan of wicked Bāhīkans
called Jartikās live.

11 They drink wine with garlic;
they are beef-eaters;
they get drunk on molasses liquor;
they are an indecent lot:

12 Their women flaunt garlands
and ornaments
and get drunkand dance and sing naked
out in the open.

13 They bray like she-donkeys
and whinny like camels.
They have sex with all.
They do as they please.

14 Drunk, they exclaim,
"O you poor hurt thing!
O you exploited unfortunate!
O you with a dead husband!"

15 And they go on dancing merrily
even on sacred festival days.
One of these wicked Bāhīka men –
a resident of Kurujāṅgala –

16 Disconsolately said to himself,
"That tall and fair girl
in that exquisite
transparent dress –

17 Surely she is dreaming of me,
her Bāhīka lover in Kurujāṅgala.
When will I cross
the Śatadru and Rāvī rivers

18 And reach my homeland
of lovely ladies wearing conch-bangles? –
ladies with large eyes
ringed with collyrium,

19 Ladies in soft wraps and deerskin,
lovely ladies swaying tipsily
to the music of *mṛdaṅga*, drum, conch,
mardala and other instruments?

20 When will we joyously roam
on ass-back, camel-back
and mule-back the forests
of *sāmī*, *pīlu* and *karīra*?

21 When will we gorge on *sattu*
and *piṇḍa*-cakes
and, waxing strong,
pounce on prosperous travellers,

22 And beat them up mercilessly
before robbing them?"
Such are the savage, indecent,
wicked-ātmaned Bāhīkas.

23 Which sane person would like
to be near them?'
That's how the Brahmins described
the character less Bāhīkas.

24 And it so happens, Śalya,
that you have a sixth
of the Bāhīkas' good and bad.
What more the Brahmins said –

25 About the Bāhīkas –
let me tell you that too.
'On the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight,
a rākṣasī

26 Used to sing in Śākala
to the accompaniment of a *dundubhi*-drum:
"Oh to be in Śākala!
Oh how I long
To sing again
This *gāthā*-song!

27 To gorge on beef,
Oh how I pine!
How I yearn to guzzle
Molasses-wine!
Oh how I wish
To mingle there
With all the ornamented
Ladies fair!

28 To sup with them
As would a glutton
On a rich spread
Of onion and mutton!
On a cow and ass,
On chicken and boar,

29 On camel and sheep –
That's what life is for!"
That's how they sing,
The drunkards of Śākala,

30 Young and old.
No dharma in Śākala.
Śalya, understand me well.
I tell you this.

31 There was another Brahmin
who said in the Kuru assembly:
'Where the forests of *pīlu* are,
and the five rivers –

32 Śatadru, Vipāśa, Irāvāti,
Candrabhāgā, Vitastā –
flow, along with the sixth,
the Sindhu –

33 Is the territory called Āraṭṭā.
It's a place
totally bereft of dharma.
No one should go there.

34 Those who have no dharma,
who are culture-less,
who have no yajñas, no rituals –
from such Bāhīkas
neither gods, *pitṛs*, nor Brahmins
accept any gifts.'

35 Another learned Brahmin said
in that noble assembly:
'In wooden vessels and clay pots
the Bāhīkas eat,

36 Without any feeling of disgust,
their *sattu*-food,
and drink their liquor as well
in dog-licked cups.
Sheep, camel and ass-milk
and curd

37 Is what the Bāhīkas drink and eat.
Their children are bastards.
They eat any food,
drink any animal's milk.

38 These are the Āraṭṭā Bāhīkas.
Sensible people shun them.'
Śalya! Keep this well in mind.
Let me tell you more.

39 Another Brahmin told me this
in the Kuru assembly.
'If you drink milk in Yugandhara,
and stay in Acyutasthala,

40 And bathe in Bhūtilaya,
you will never attain heaven.'
Where the five rivers emerge
from the mountain,

41 Is Āraṭṭā Bāhīka land.
No decent man should stay
even two days there.
Two bloodsucking *piśācas* –
Vehi and Hīka – live
in the Vipāśā river.

42 The Bāhīkas are the offspring
of these two *piśācas.*
They are not the children
of Prajāpati-Brahmā.
Born of low yonīs,
how can they know dharma?

43 Wrong dharma is practised
by the Kāraskaras, Māhiṣakas,
Kuraṇḍas, Keralas,
Karkoṭakas and Vīrakas.
One should stay away
from all of them.

44 Once a huge-hipped rākṣasī
spent a night in the house
of a *tīrtha-yātrā* pilgrim
and said to him:

45 'The territory known as Āraṭṭā
is populated by Bāhīkas
who are heretic Brahmins living there
since Prajāpati-Brahmā's time.

46 Ignorant of the Vedas, non-performers of yajñas,
born of caste girls
having sex with slaves –
the gods do not accept food from them.

47 The Prasthalas, Madras, Gāndhāras,
Āraṭṭās, Khaśas, Vasātis,
Sindhus and Saubiras –
all these are despicable races.'

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 "Listen well, Śalya," said Karṇa,
"and understand what I say.
Listen to all that I say
with undivided attention.

2 Once a Brahmin stayed with us
as our guest.
Pleased with our behaviour,
he said to us:

3 'I have lived a long time
in the Himālayas,
alone on one of the peaks,
but I have had occasion
to observe all kinds of dharmas
that people follow.

4 I have never met a people
totally against dharma.
One way or another,
all races practised a dharma
as propounded by those
who are learned in the Vedas.

5 Mahārāja! As I travelled
in these lands of different dharmas,
I came to Bāhīka.
And this is what I heard.

6 You begin as a Brahmin
in Bāhīka.
Then you become a Kṣatriya
in Bāhīka.
Then you become a Vaiśya
in Bāhīka.
Then a Śudra.
Then a barber.

7 A barber then becomes a Brahmin
in Bāhīka.
And the Brahmin ends up as a slave
in Bāhīka.

8 In the same family in Bāhīka,
one becomes a Brahmin,
others become what they please.
The Gāndhāras, Madrakas
and Bāhīkas – they are all
dim-witted people.

9 In the course of my travels
all over the earth,
that's what I heard
about the irregular
intermixture of dharma
practised in Bāhīka.'

10 Understand this well, Śalya.
And I have still more
to tell you about another person
who criticised the Bāhīkas:

11 'They say in the distant past
a gang of robbers
abducted a chaste Āraṭṭā girl
and, in total violation of dharma,
raped her.
She cursed them, saying:

12 "I am an unmarried girl.
I have relatives and friends.
Against all dharma,
you raped me.
All the women in your families
will become unchaste!

13 You perverts!
You will never escape
the punishment you deserve!"
This is why the Āraṭṭās' sisters' sons
become heirs of their property,
not their own sons.'

14 The Kauravas, Pāñcālas, Śālvas,
Matsyas, Naimiṣas,
Kosalas, Kāśis, Aṅgas,
Kaliṅgas, Magadhas,

15 And Cedis
are mahā-fortune-favoured peoples:
they know the tenets
of everlasting dharma.
The good of every country know;
the Bāhīkas don't.

16 The Matsyas, Kurus, Pāñcālas, Naimiṣas
are discerning races
and respect the tenets
of ancient dharma.
The wily Madras
and five-river dwellers don't.

17 Now you know this, rājā Śalya.
So shut up and don't babble
about dharma-kathā!
You are the Bāhīka rājā,
their guardian, you get one-sixth
of their good and bad.

18 Or can it be that since
you don't protect them,
you get a sixth of only the bad?
Only the rājā
who protects deserves to get
a sixth of the good.

19 In the past, when pūjā was given
to dharma in all lands,
Pitāmaha-Brahmā observed
how dharma was flouted
in the five-river land, and he said,
'Shame on you!'

20 With Brahma himself condemning
your cross-caste,
misbegotten and ill-deed-doing
five-river rabble,
who are you to spout
advice on dharma?

21 This was how Brahmā condemned
the so-called dharma
of the five-river people.
Others kept their sva-dharma.
He refused pūjā-respect only
to the five-river race.

22 Learn, Śalya, learn from all this.
I'll tell you more.
Bathing in a pond,
the rākṣasa Kalmāṣapāda once said:

23 'For a Kṣatriya to beg
is filth,
For a Brahmin to deny *sruti*
is filth,
The Bāhīkas are the filth
of the earth,
The women of Madra
are the filthiest of females.'

24 A rājā rescued Kalmāṣapāda
from drowning,
and asked him some questions.
Let me place before you
the rākṣasa's replies
to those questions.

25 'The Mlecchas are the filth
of mankind,
Liquor-peddlers are the filth
of Mlecchas,
Eunuchs are the filth
of liquor-peddlers,
And rāja-yājakas are the filth
of eunuchs.

26 The filth of the rāja-yājakas
and the filth of the Madra race
will stick to you
if you do not save me from drowning.'

27 These words of the rākṣasa
are the life-saving remedy
for anyone possessed
by a rākṣasa
and anyone to whom poison
is fatally administered.

28 The Pāñcālas observe
the wisdom of the Vedas,
The Kauravas observe
the path of dharma,
The Matsyas observe
the way of truth,
The Śūrasenas observe
the practice of yajñas,
The people of the east observe
the behaviour of slaves,
The people of the south
have fallen low,
The Bāhīkas are thieves,
the Saurāṣṭrans are bastards.

29 Ingratitude, stealing, drunkenness,
sleeping with a guru's wife,
bitter speech, cow-killing, absence
from home at night, wearing
others dressess and ornaments –

30 Such is the dharma of the Āraṭṭā!
No adharma
is beyond them!
Shame on them!
The Pāñcālas, Kauravas,
Naimisas and Matsyas
know dharma well.
The people of the north,
the Aṅgas and Magadha elders
also follow dharma.

31 The gods, led by Jātaveda-Agni,
preside in the east;
the pitṛs, protected by Yama the just,
preside in the south.

32 Of gods the most powerful Varuṇa
presides in the west;
Bhagavān Soma and the Brahmins
preside in the north.

33 Rākṣasas, piśācas and Guhyakas,
mahārāja,
protect the finest-of-mountains
Himavant and Gandhamādana.

34 Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa protects all
the world's creatures.
(None protects Bāhīka.)
Magadhans catch meaning
by hints, Kosalans interpret
eye movements and glances.

35 The Kauravas and Pāñcālas
catch meaning
even in half-expressed words.
The Śālvas need full sentences.
The Śibis and the hill people
fail to understand whatever is said.

36 O rājā! As for the Yavanas –
they know everything.
The Śuras are exceptional too.
The Mlecchas have
their own jargon; still others
need words all the time.

37 And the Bāhīkas – they twist
all you say.
The Madrakas don't understand
anything at all.
Salya! You are one of them.
No, don't reply!
The Madras are the filth
of this earth.

38 Wine-guzzler, guru-wife-violater,
embryo-killer, wealth-stealer –
shame on this dharma of Āraṭṭās
and the people of the five rivers!

39 Know this. And shut up!
Don't contradict me.
For if you do,
I'll kill you first
and later kill
Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna."

40 Śalya replied: "You know who
forsake their ailing friends,
and sell off their wives
and children? The Aṅgas do.
And you, Karṇa,
are the lord of Aṅga!

41 Forget your anger.
Keep cool.
Remember the list of your faults
that Bhīṣma paraded
before the assembly
of charioteers and chariot-heroes?

42 Karṇa!
There are Brahmins everywhere.
Everywhere are Kṣatriyas,
Vaisyas and Śūdras.
In every country there are
pious, virtuous women.

43 In every country
men make fun of each other
and insult each other
and lust after women.

44 In every country are experts
in the art of running down others.
Few are ashamed of their own faults.

45 Every country has a rājā
pursuing his own dharma.
Everywhere criminals are punished.
Everywhere are men of dharma.

46 There is no country, Karṇa,
where all are
wicked rascals. Believe me,
in every country
are people who excel even
the gods in goodness."

47 Sañjaya said:
Rājā Duryodhana
put a stop to the exchange
between Karṇa and Śalya.
He addressed Karṇa as his *sakhā*-friend,
and he folded his hands
in *añjali* before Śalya.

48 Prevented by Duryodhana,
Karṇa kept silent.
Śalya turned and advanced
against the enemy forces.

49 Karṇa smiled
as if encouraging Śalya: "Proceed!"

SECTION FORTY-SIX

Sañjaya said:
1 Seeing the unique strategy
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
protected by hostile-army-crusher
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Karṇa

2 Advanced with leonine shouts
on his thundering chariot.
The earth shook with the noise
of musical instruments.

3 Foe-chastising, war-expert Karṇa
trembled with anger.
O bull-brave Bharata Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
The mahā-radiant hero Karṇa
then decided
on a counter-strategy.

4 Creating havoc among the Pāṇḍavas
like Maghavan-Indra
among the anti-gods,
Karṇa wounded Yudhiṣṭhira,
and isolated him by forcing
him to his right.

5 O lord of the earth!
Your soldiers
were over-joyed and inspired
seeing Karṇa.
They started discussing
among themselves.

6 "Arjuna and Karṇa will battle today,"
they said.
"A mahā-battle. Rājā Duryodhana's
enemies will be crushed.

7 Phālguna-Arjuna will flee
the instant he sees Karṇa.
Marching behind Karṇa
in the war today,

8 We will see his arrows
dominate the field.
All that we have desired
for so long,

9 Will be fulfilled today.
We'll see a god-antigod clash!
A mahā-horrendous
battle will it be.

10 One or the other is bound
to win today.
In this mahā-battle
Karṇa will kill Arjuna.

11 Which man doesn't have high hopes
in this world?"
O finest of the Kauravas!
Saying this, the Kauravas
beat thousands of war-drums
and other instruments.

12 *Bheri*-drums! Lion-like roars!
A mahā-cacophony
of all kinds of drums!

13 O respectworthy monarch!
Countless men from both sides
Faced each other, dancing
And screaming and challenging.

14 Protecting the feet
of war-elephants
were foot-soldiers brandishing
paṭṭiṣa-pointed spears
swords
bows and arrows
bhuśuṇḍi-firearms

15 *Bhindipāla*-slicers
śūla-spears
cakra-discs.
A battle began
resembling the clash
between gods and antigods.

16 "Tell me, Sañjaya," asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"how did Rādheya-Karṇa
manoeuvre against the Pāṇḍavas
and against Dhṛṣṭadyumna
protected by Bhīma,

17 Because Dhṛṣṭadyumna was invincible?
And how did the Pāṇḍavas,
those mahā-expert heroes of bowcraft,
counter Karṇa's strategy?
Tell me, Sañjaya,
which heroes were stationed
at both wings of my army?

18 How did they divide themselves
for battle?
And how did the Pāṇḍavas arrange
their forces?

19 How did this mahā-dreadful battle start?
When Karṇa attacked Yudhiṣṭhira,
Where was dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna?

20 Who dared to attack Yudhiṣṭhira
Who was protected
by no less a hero than Arjuna
Who routed all
the creatures of Khāṇḍavaprastha?
Who but Rādheya-Karṇa
would even think of doing so
and emerging alive?"

21 Let me explain (said Sañjaya)
the strategies employed,
what Arjuna did, and how the kings
of both sides fought.

22 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,
the energetic Magadhas
and Kṛtavarman
of the Sātvatas
comprised the right wing.

23 Stationed near them,
armed with glittering *prāsa*-lances,
riding richly-caprisoned horses,
were mahā-chariot-hero Śakuni
and Ulūka, as protectors
of the right wing.

24 Reinforcing them
were the never-enemy-fearing
Gandhara warriors and hard-
to-defeat hill-warriors.
They were like fearful-looking
bloodsucking *piśācas*,
like swarm upon swarm
of locusts.

25 Thirtyfour thousands suicide squad
saṁśaptaka chariot-heroes
stood poised on the left wing
of the army of your sons,

26 With the sole aim of killing
Krishna and Arjuna.
Reinforcing them, the Kāmbojas,
Śakas and Yavanas,

27 With chariots, horses, and foot-soldiers
guarding the left flank,
challenged Arjuna
and mahā-powerful Krishna.

28 In the centre was Karṇa,
at the army's head,
dazzlingly armoured,
adorned with armlets and garlands.

29 Brimming with anger and vigour,
he stood in the front
in the company of your sons,
inspiring the entire army,

30 War-expert, mahā-muscled Karṇa,
blazing like the sun,
refulgent like Vaiśvānara fire.
Pink-eyed, magnificent to look at,
seated on the back
of a mahā-elephant,

31 Was Duḥśāsana,
at the rear of the army,
encircled by soldiers.
Then, O mahārāja,
following him,
was king Duryodhana himself,

32 Variously armed and vividly armoured,
protected by his brothers
and the mahā-valiant warriors
of the Kekayas and the Madras.

33 Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Surrounded by them,
your son looked like
Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices
ringed by the gods.
Aśvatthāman and the Kaurava
mahā-chariot-heroes,

34 With an army of valiant
Mleccha warriors
astride elephants
with rutting juice
streaming like monsoon rain,
followed the chariots.

35 With Vaijayantī flags
and glittering war-weapons,
those elephants looked like
tree-adorned marching hills.

36 Armed with *paṭṭiśa*-pointed spears
and swords,
thousands of never-retreating foot-soldiers
protected the elephant ranks.

37 Horse-riders, chariot-heroes
and elephant-warriors –
that rājā of army-formations
resembled the ranks
of the armies of the gods
and antigods.

38 That mahā-manoeuvre formation
devised by Karṇa
in strict accordance
with the battle-plans of Bṛhaspati
struck terror in the ranks
of his enemies.

39 Eager for battle, from both wings
of the assembled army
issued foot-soldiers, horsemen,
chariot-heroes, elephant-riders,
like massive rain-clouds
of the monsoon.

40 Seeing Karṇa at the head
of the advancing force,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira turned
to foe-annihilating,
unparalleled Arjuna
and said:

41 "Arjuna, do you see this
mahā-battle-formation?
With its wings
and its wing-protectors,
our enemy's army dazzles
on the battlefield.

42 Against an army of such
mahā-striking power,
make plans to see
that we are not defeated."

43 Arjuna folded his hands
in *añjali*
before rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and replied:
"What you say will be done.
Exactly so.

44 O Bharata descendant!
I will follow
the war manuals to the letter.
I will crush the enemy.
I will kill its leader,
and so destroy it."

45 "Very well," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"It's for you then
to confront Rādheya-Karṇa.
Bhīma will take on
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Nakula will face Vṛṣasena,
and Sahadeva deal
with Subala's son Śakuni.

46 Śatānīka will fight Duḥśāsana,
the bull-brave hero of the Śinis
Sātyaki will face
Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna will take on
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
and I personally
will fight Kṛpa.

47 The sons of Draupadī,
led by Śikhaṇḍin,
will proceed against
the remaining sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
In this way,
our different army units
will wipe out the enemy."

48 To Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna said,
"So be it!" He readied his army,
himself at its head.

49 Mahārāja! Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
took command
of the right wing,
mahā-muscled Bhīma of the left.

50 Sātyaki, Draupadī's sons
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
with their ranks,
stood at the head of the army.

51 Yudhiṣṭhira blocked the enemy
with his forces,
and ordered Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin
to face the foe.

52 A splendid spectacle it was!
A battle-formation
of horses, elephants,
foot-soldiers and chariots,
with Dhṛṣṭadyumna
at its head!

53 The chariot-horses of Arjuna
were it would seem
the god of fire Agni personified!
Vaiśvānara-Agni!
Agni who issued in the past
from Brahmā's own mouth!

54 And the chariot in which
Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna were riding
was the same chariot in which in the past
rode Brahmā, Iśāna-Śiva, Indra and Varuṇa.

55 Seeing that incredible chariot
advancing, Śalya turned
to brilliant-in-battle Karṇa
and said:

56 "There is the white-horsed chariot,
driven by Krishna!
There comes the chariot to ruin
all our soldiers,
as surely as fruit is
the consequence of karma!

57 And in it is Kaunteya-Arjuna,
whom you were expecting.
Can you hear the loud applause
like rumbling rain-clouds?

58 It's mahātmā Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Look at the cloud of dust
smothering the sky!

59 Karṇa! The earth is shaking under
the thudding wheels!
Mahā-storms swirl around the armies!

60 Carnivorous beasts are howling,
animals screaming!
Karṇa! See the mahā-dreadful,
fearful, horripilating

61 Evil omen planet Ketu
blotting the sun!
Look at the hordes of animals
on all sides

62 And powerful-bodied tigers
staring at the sun!
See *kaṅka*-ravens and vultures
in their thousands

63 Staring at each other as if
in deep conversation!
Karṇa! The chowries attached
to your mahā-chariot

64 Have burst into flame,
and your flags are flapping wildly!
Look, your mahā-bodied
and mahā-swift

65 Handsome, Garuḍa-in-the-sky-like
horses are shivering!
From these evil omens,
kings, on this earth,

66 Will lie dead,
hundreds of thousands of them.
This is clear, Karṇa.
Horripilating sounds of conches,

67 *Ānaka*-drums and *mṛdaṅgas*
reverberate everywhere,
O Rādheya-Karṇa! The din of arrows,
men, horses, chariots. . .

68 Listen, Karṇa, to mahā-ātmaned heroes
twanging their bows!
Exquisitely embroidered
with gold and silver,

69 Multi-coloured war-flags flutter
in gusts of wind,
their sun-moon-star symbols tinkling
with small *kiṅkiṇī*-bells.

70 Look, Karṇa, they flash like lightning
on Arjuna's chariot!
These flags, slapped by the wind,
flap *kaṇa-kaṇa-kaṇa,*

71 Like flags on the flying chariots
of the gods, Karṇa.
These beflagged chariots belong
to the mahā-ātmaned Pāñcālas.

72 And look! Ape-emblemed,
Kuntī's invincible son,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
is driving towards us.

73 Atop Pārtha-Arjuna's war-flag
can be seen
the fearful vānara-ape,
instilling misery in his enemies.

74 Prescient Krishna with
Cakra
Mace
Śārṅga-bow
Conch . . .
And on Krishna's chest
The dazzling Kaustubha-gem.

75 Vāsudeva-Krishna is the valiant hero
with mace and Śārṅga-bow
who drives the chariot
of pure-white horses
with wind-swift speed towards us.

76 Can you hear the twang
of the bowstring
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna?
With his sharp arrows
he will kill his enemies.

77 The earth is littered with the heads
of rājās who never retreated
in battle –
heads with moon-bright faces
and large pink eyes.

78 They fall –
the sliced arms
of battle-delighting warriors,
warriors with uplifted weapons,
scent-smeared arms,
arms like *parigha*-iron-spiked-maces.

79 They fall –
the horses
with tongues pulled out
and eyes protruding,
with riders and all,
and sleep forever
on the earth.

80 They fall –
the hill-huge elephants,
they topple like hills,
mangled and mutilated
by Pārtha-Arjuna.

81 They fall –
the chariots that resemble
the cities of Gandharvas –
their kings killed,
they fall
like the sanctified flying chariots
of the dwellers of heaven
falling from the sky.

82 Look!
The army is decimated
by diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna
like thousands of forest creatures
of all species
mauled by a lion.

83 The heroic advancing Pāṇḍavas
are slaughtering the earth-lords,
elephants, horses, and chariot-heroes
and foot-soldiers of your army.

84 Like the sun blotted by clouds,
Pārtha-Arjuna cannot be sēen.
Only the twang of his bow
can be heard,
only the flag-top of his chariot
is visible.

85 You will soon see, Karṇa,
about whom you enquired –
the valiant white-horsed hero,
Arjuna himself,
who destroys his enemies,
whose charioteer is Krishna.

86 You will see them today, Karṇa:
pink-eyed, tiger-among-men
foe-annihilating
Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Arjuna
riding the same chariot.

87 Rādheya-Karṇa!
If today you can kill
Gāṇḍīva-bow-wielding Arjuna
whose charioteer
is Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
then you will be our rājā.

88 Challenged by the Saṁśaptaka
suicide squad,
Arjuna is advancing swiftly
towards them;
he will spread carnage
among his enemies."

89 Incensed beyond words,
Karṇa retorted
to the Madra ruler Śalya:
"Look, the Saṁśaptakas
are attacking Arjuna
from all sides.

90 Like the sun obscured
by clouds,
Parthā-Arjuna can no longer
be seen.
Arjuna will die, Śalya,
in that ocean of warriors."

91 Śalya replied:
"Who can kill Pāvaka-Agni,
the god of fire,
with fuel?
Who can drown Varuṇa,
the ocean god,
with water?
Who can imprison wind
or drink the ocean?

92 I think that is Arjuna's greatness.
Even Indra with his hosts of gods
cannot defeat Arjuna in battle.

93 Please yourself if you will
with lovely words.
The truth is that Arjuna
is invincible.
Better make other plans
if you must.

94 Who can lift the earth
with his two bare arms,
Who can incinerate all creatures
with his wrath,
Who can hurl the gods
down from heaven –
that man might defeat Arjuna
on the battlefield.

95 Look, the maha-muscled hero,
Arjuna, the fearsome son of Kuntī,
stationed there like
the radiant Meru mountain!

96 And there too is Bhīma,
brimming with anger,
recalling the wrongs done,
waiting to take revenge,
eager for victory
on the battlefield.

97 And destroyer-of-hostile-cities
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
finest of men of dharma,
also waits on the field.
It is not easy for his enemies
to defeat him.

98 And there are the twin Aśvins,
tigers-among-men
Nakula and Sahadeva,
both excellent warriors,
both very difficult to defeat
in battle.

99 And there are the five sons
of Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
eager for battle, each of them
as valiant as Arjuna.

100 And supremely energetic,
truly victorious Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Drupada's son, along with others
is ready for battle.

101 And Sātyaki of the Sātvatas,
who terrifies his enemies
as Indra does, whose wrath
resembles Antāka-Yama's,
is waiting on the battlefield
thirsting for a clash."

102 O rājā! The two lion-like heroes debated,
and the two armies advanced
inexorably, swiftly, like Gaṅgā and Yamunā.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 "Tell me, Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"with the armies
and the soldiers poised for battle,
how did Pārtha-Arjuna
attack the Saṁśaptakas,
and Karṇa the Pāṇḍavas?

2 You are a skilled speaker.
Give me every detail.
I never tire of listening
to the feats of heroes."

3 Sañjaya replied:
To counter the massive army
formation deviously devised
by your son Duryodhana,
Arjuna planned his own strategy.

4 At the head of that vast,
glittering formation
stood Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
commanding a host
of horsemen, elephant-warriors,
chariots and foot-soldiers.

5 With his pigeon-white horses,
and refulgent
like the sun or the moon,
Prṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
bow in hand, stood like
Kāla himself personified.

6 Eager for battle, Draupadī's sons
took their stand
by the side of Pārṣata Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Wearing celestial armour,
they were formidable
like tigers.

7 They followed him like planets
around the moon.
Seeing the Saṁśaptakas arrayed
on the battlefield,

8 Infuriated Arjuna twanged his Gāṇḍīva,
and attacked.
Intent on killing Pārtha-Arjuna,
the Saṁśaptakas,

9 Victory-minded, with death their aim,
advanced against Arjuna.
Soldiers, horsemen, rutting elephants,
chariot-warriors

10 And valiant foot-warriors began
assailing Arjuna.
A tumultuous clash took place
with Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

11 I have heard it was like the clash
with the Nivātakavacas.
On the battlefield, chariots, horses,
flags, elephants, foot-soldiers,

12 Arrows, bows, swords, *cakras*,
paraśu-battle-axes, arms
brandishing war-weapons
of all kinds,

13 And heads of warriors, in thousands,
were destroyed by Arjuna.
In that mahā-whirlpool of warriors
in that Pātāla underworld,

14 Sank Arjuna's chariot – so thinking,
the Saṁśaptakas rejoiced.
But, slaying his attackers,
Arjuna emerged from the north,

15 Angrily, and began slaughtering
your forces
in the south and the west,
like Rudra-Śiva slaughtering
all of creation.
The Pāñcālas, Cedis and Sṛñjayas,

16 O noble king, clashed fiercely
with your army.
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman,
and Subala's son Śakuni,

17 Roused to anger,
with all their zealous soldiers,
skilled in the art
of destroying chariots,
started attacking
the Kosalas, Kāśis,
Matsyas, Kārūṣas
and Kekayas,

18 As well as the fiercely aggressive
Śūrasena warriors.
That horrendous clash wiped out
the lives and ill deeds

19 Of valiant Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas
and Śūdras,
and bestowed on them dharma,
heaven and glory.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Duryodhana and his brothers

20 And other Kaurava heroes
and the mahā-chariot-heroes of Madra,
when he was fighting
the Pāṇḍavas,
the Pāñcālas and Cedis
and Sātyaki,

21 Banded together
in order to protect Karṇa.
Harassing that mahā-alliance
with his sharp arrows, Karṇa

22 Attacked the leading chariot-heroes,
and afflicted Yudhiṣṭhira.
Depriving hundreds of thousands
of their uniforms,
their weapons, bodies,
their lives,

23 And despatching them to heaven
and glory,
Karṇa delighted the hearts
of his well-wishers.
O respectworthy monarch!
That warrior-horse-elephant-
killing clash of Kurus and Sṛñjayas
was like a god-antigod clash.

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 "Tell me, Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"all about the carnage
perpetrated by Karṇa in the ranks
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's army.

2 Which of the Pāṇḍava heroes
resisted Karna?
Whom did he crush before
reaching Yudhiṣṭhira?"

3 Seeing the Pāṇḍava-warriors led
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna
(replied Sañjaya), foe-crushing Karṇa.
attacked the Pāñcālas.

4 Hopeful of victory, the Pāñcālas
swiftly advanced towards
mahā-ātmaned Karṇa, like *haṁsa*-swans
speeding towards the ocean.

5 Cacophonous din of musical instruments!
Thousands of conches
instilling terror in hearts, and
bherī-drums blaring!

6 What a shattering, deafening noise!
Whistling arrows,
trumpeting elephants, neighing horses,
clattering chariots, leonine war-cries!

7 The whole earth trembled!
Mountains, trees, oceans,
cloud-covered sky, sun, moon,
planets, heaven itself!

8 The world's creatures heard, and
the weak among them
were so agitated that they
collapsed and died.

9 Then anger-impelled Karṇa
swiftly let loose weapons
against the Pāṇḍavas, like Maghavat-
Indra against the antigods.

10 Penetrating the Pāṇḍava ranks,
Karṇa's arrow-showers
Killed seventyseven of the leading
Prabhadraka-warriors.

11 Twentyfive sharp lovely-feathered
arrows of that finest
of chariot-heroes Karṇa killed
twentyfive Pāñcālas.

12 With gold-feathered *nārāca* arrows
that shredded the bodies
of victims, Karṇa killed hundreds
of thousands of Cedis.

13 Mahārāja! Even as he performed
these superhuman feats,
the Pāñcālas chariots surrounded him
on all sides.

14 O Bharata monarch!
Fitting five unrepulsable arrows,
Vaikartana-Karṇa
killed five Pāñcālas:

15 Bhānudeva, Citrasena,
Senavindu, Tapana,
and Śūrasena –
these five Pāñcālas.

16 With the deaths of those five
valiant Pāñcālas
in that mahā-clash, rose wails
of Hai! Hai! in the army.

17 Mahārāja! Ten Pāñcāla mahā-chariot-heroes
surrounded Karṇa,
but with his arrows
he killed them all.

18 O respectworthy monarch!
Protecting his chariot-wheels,
Karṇa's two fearless sons,
Suṣeṇa and Satyasena, joined the battle.

19 The mahā-chariot-hero Vṛṣasena,
Karṇa's eldest son,
protected the rear
of Karṇa's chariot.

20 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Sātyaki,
the five sons of Draupadī,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma, Janamejaya,
Śikhaṇḍin, the Prabhadraka heroes,

21 The Cedis, Kekayas, Pāñcālas,
Nakula and Sahadeva, the Matsyas,
all clad in armour, advanced
to kill Rādheya-Karṇa.

22 They rained arrows and varied weapons
upon their terroriser Karṇa,
like clouds in the monsoon
drenching a mountain.

23 O rājā! Many warriors of your army
and Karṇa's sons,
to protect their father,
blocked the attacking Pāṇḍavas.

24 With a broad-headed *bhalla*-arrow
Suṣeṇa sliced the bow of Bhīma
and with seven *nārācas*
pierced his chest – and roared!

25 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
dexterously strung
another strong bow,
and sliced the bow of Suṣeṇa.

26 Infuriated, he seemed to dance
in his chariot,
wounding Suṣeṇa with ten arrows,
and Karṇa with seventy sharp arrows.

27 Before the very eyes
of his friends,
Bhīma with ten arrows
killed Karṇa's son Bhānusena,
along with his horses, charioteer,
weapons and flags.

28 Sliced by a razor-sharp arrow,
the moon-lovely head
of Bhānusena looked like a lotus
snapped from its stem.

29 Turning his attention next to harassing
other enemies, after killing Karṇa's son Bhānusena,
Bhīma sundered the bows of Kṛpa and
Hārdika-Kṛtavarman wounding them grievously.

30 With three arrows Duḥśāsana,
with six steel arrows Śakuni;
turning to Ulūka and Patatri,
he unchårioted them both.

31 He strung another arrow and
shouted to Suṣeṇa,
"Now you die!" But Karṇa
swiftly deflected
that shaft, and wounded Bhīma
with three arrows.

32 Bhīma fitted a beautiful
knotted, extra-sharp arrow,-
and shot it swiftly
at Suṣeṇa,
but Karṇa disintegrated it
in mid-flight.

33 To protect his son
and kill cruel Bhīma,
Karṇa released seventy three arrows
at Bhīma.

34 Readying a splendid, super-strong bow,
Suṣeṇa wounded Nakula
in the arms and chest
with five arrows.

35 Nakula retaliated with twenty
super-strong arrows,
and screamed a war-cry
to terrorise Karṇa.

36 Maharaja! Countering Nakula
with ten arrows,
with a razor-shaft the maha-chariot-hero
Suṣeṇa sliced Nakula's bow.

37 Wild with rage, Nakula fitted
another bow
and blocked Suṣeṇa's advance
with nine arrows.

38 O rājā! Shrouding the quarters
with arrow-showers,
that crusher of hostile heroes
killed Suṣeṇa's charioteer,
and afflicting Suṣeṇa himself
with three arrows,

39 He disintegrated Suṣeṇa's
powerful bow
with three broad-headed
bhalla-shafts.
His head swirling with anger,
Karṇa's son Suṣeṇa
quickly readied
another bow,

40 And harassed Nakula
with sixty arrows,
and Sahadeva with seven.
It was like
the god-antigod battle,
this mahā-horrific clash

41 Between the two opposing parties
bent on mutual slaughter.
With seven steel arrows
Sātyaki wounded Vṛṣasena,
then with seventy more
he inflicted more injuries.
With three arrows he harassed
Vṛṣasena's charioteer.

42 Mahārāja! With curved knotted arrows
Vṛṣasena grazed
the forehead of the mahā-chariot-hero
Sātyaki.

43 Mahārāja! That grievous injury
infuriated Sātyaki.
In a burst of anger,
Sātyaki

44 Quickly selected fifteen
of the finest arrows;
with three of these he killed
Vṛṣasena's charioteer;

45 With one he splintered the bow
of Vṛṣasena;
with seven more he killed
the chariot-horses;
with a single shaft he sundered
the flag-pole;
and with three more he injured
Vṛṣasena in the chest.

46 Briefly stunned by the destruction
by Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
of his charioteer, chariot-horses
and flag-pole
on the field of battle,
Vṛṣasena quickly recovered

47 And stood up, and brandishing
his sword and shield,
he rushed at Sātyaki,
determined to kill him.
Sātyaki quickly shattered
onrushing Vṛṣasena's

48 Sword and shield with
special arrows
known as *vārāha-karṇa*
or "boar-eared".
Seeing Vṛṣasena weaponless and
unchărioted,

49 Drove up swiftly, picked up
Vṛṣasena in his chariot,
and sped him away
to a safe distance.
Riding another chariot,
the mahā-chariot-hero Vṛṣasena

50 Shot seventy three arrows
at Draupadī's sons,
five at Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,
sixty four at Bhīma,
and five arrows
at Sahadeva,

51 Thirty at Nakula,
seven at Śatānīka,
ten at Śikhaṇḍin,
and a hundred arrows
at Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
wounding all of them.

52 O Indra-among-rājās!
O ruler of the world!
The mahā-bow-expert
son of Karṇa, Vṛṣasena
hoping for victory,
systematically afflicted
all these great warriors
as well as others.

53 His task accomplished,
Karṇa's hard-to-defeat son
drove back to protect the rear ranks
of Karṇa's army.
With nine brand-new arrows
Sātyaki deprived Duḥśāsana

54 Of his charioteer, horses, and chariot,
and with three grazed his forehead.
Riding another
splendidly decorated chariot,

55 Infusing encouragement in Karṇa,
Duḥśāsana launched
a fresh offensive
against the Pāṇḍavas.
Dhṛṣṭadyumna wounded Karṇa
with ten arrows,

56 Draupadī's sons with seventythree,
Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
with seven arrows.
Bhīma wounded Karṇa
with sixty-four arrows,
Sahadeva with seven,

57 Nakula with thirty,
Śatānīka with seven,
Śikhaṇḍin with ten,
and Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
wounded Karṇa
with a hundred arrows.

58 O Indra-among-rājās!
Fired with desire for victory,
all those mahā-archers
attacked the son
of a Sūta, Karṇa,
in that mahā-battle.

59 Careening in his chariot,
the Sūta's son,
foe-annihilating Karṇa
succeeded in wounding
all of his antagonists
with ten arrows each.

60 O mahā-fortune-favoured monarch!
We saw it
with our own eyes –
the valour and dexterity
of mahā-ātmaned Karṇa.
An incredible spectacle!

61 You could not make out
when he chose an arrow,
when he aimed it,
when he fired it.
You only saw the enemy
slain by his anger.

62 O Indra-among-rājās!
One instant he was here,
the next instant
he was there.
You could not see him
in any one place.

63 O rājā! All we could see
were his arrows –
here, there, everywhere.
Like swarms of locusts
they shrouded the sky
in all directions.

64 No heaven, no sky, no earth,
no directions –
only a mass of obscuring
sharp arrows!
The firmanent glowed
radiant-red,
like clouds drenched
with sunlight.

65 And Karṇa, the illustrious son
of Rādhā –
he seemed to be dancing!
For each enemy shaft
he received, he replied
with three.

66 With ten arrows each he destroyed
horses, charioteers, chariots,
war-flags, and screamed his war-cry
His enemy gave way to him.

67 Exterminating the mahā-archers
with his arrow-showers,
foe-crushing Rādheya-Karṇa
made his way unopposed
through the ranks of the army
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

68 He wiped out three hundred
never-retreating-in-battle
Cedi-chariot-heroes,
and launched an attack
with swarms of arrows
on the army of Yudhiṣṭhira.

69 O rājā! To save rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Pāṇḍavas, Śikhaṇḍin and Sātyaki
joined ranks and encircled
Rādheya's son Karṇa.

70 The valiant mahā-archers
of your army also
organised their ranks
to protect
the everywhere-rushing Karṇa
on all sides.

71 O lord of the world!
A host of musical instruments sounded,
and warriors screamed
lion-roaring war-cries.

72 And once again,
the Kauravas
and the Pāṇḍavas
were locked in battle.
On one side
Yudhiṣṭhira and other Pāṇḍavas,
on the other
the Sūta's son Karṇa and us.

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 Sañjaya continued: Cutting through
the ranks of chariots,
horses, elephants, and foot-soldiers
who encircled him,
Karṇa resumed his offensive
against Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Pulverising the countless weapons
the enemy hurled
against him, Karṇa fearlessly
sliced his way through.

3 Smashing his enemies' heads,
arms and thighs,
he ensured their fatal collapse
on the battlefield.
Many of the wounded
fled for their lives.

4 Urged by Sātyaki, the Drāviḍas,
Andhakas and Niṣādas
swooped upon Karṇa,
determined to kill him.

5 They were cut down
like a forest of śāla-trees,
decimated by the arrows
of Karṇa, and lay there
with arms chopped off
and head-dresses beside them.

6 They lay there, sprawled,
hundreds of thousands
of warriors,
deprived of their life,
but filling
all the quarters and directions
with their fame
and their glory.

7 Like physicians trying
to cure diseases
with mantras and drugs,
the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas
tried to obstruct
Vaikartana-Karṇa
ravaging the battlefield
like Antaka-Yama.

8 But like an incurable disease
immune to mantras and drugs,
Karṇa demolished
all opposition
and once again swooped
on Yudhiṣṭhira.

9 Death cannot harm the knower of Brahman;
Karṇa could not harm
Yudhiṣṭhira protected
by the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas, and Kekayas.

10 Seeing foe-slaying Karna
obstructed near him,
Yudhiṣṭhira, his eyes flaming
in anger, said:

11 "Karṇa! Karṇa! Ill-visioned son of a Sūta!
Listen to me!
You who are always jealous
of Phālguna-Arjuna!

12 You who listen to the advice
of Duryodhana
and always obstruct us!
You who always
use force
and valour
and hatred
against the Pāṇḍavas!

13 Show if you will
your mahā-manliness today!
I will fight you today
in this mahā-battle –
and I will destroy
all you *śraddhā* for war!"

14 Mahārāja! Saying this to Karṇa,
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
afflicted Karṇa with ten gold –
feathered steel shafts.

15 O Bharata descendant!
The Sūta's son Karṇa,
foe-subduing Karṇa,
the mahā-archer Karṇa
smiled, and shot back
ten arrows
called *vatsadantas* –
calf-toothed shafts.

16 O respectworthy monarch!
This contemptuous treatment
by the Sūta's son Karṇa
made Yudhiṣṭhira
flare up in anger,
like Hutāśana-Agni itself.

17 Surrounded as if by flaming
garlands, the body
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira looked
like the all-consuming
saṁvartaka-conflagration
at the end of a yuga.

18 He pulled taut the string
of his gold-decorated
massive bow, and fitted in it
a sharp arrow
charged with the power
of pulversing mountains.

19 With the deliberate aim
of killing the Sūta's son Karṇa,
he stretched the string fully taut,
and shot the Yama-daṇḍa death-arrow.

20 Rushing at tremendous speed,
crackling
like thunder and lightning,
the arrow plunged,
straight in the left side
of the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa.

21 Dazed by the intensity
of the shaft
piercing his left side,
mahā-muscled Karṇa
dropped his bow
and fainted in his chariot.

22 Śalya saw him topple
as if dead.
Thinking of what was best
for Arjuna,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira refrained from
attacking Karṇa further.

23 The mahā-army congregation
of Duryodhana,
seeing Karṇa collapse,
wailed "Hai! Hai!"
and the faces of the warriors
turned pale.

24 Mahārāja! In the ranks
of the Pāṇḍavas,
the feat of their rājā
made them break
into leonine roars of joy
and acclamation.

25 But famed-for-cruelty
Rādhā's son Karṇa
quickly regained his senses,
and started
making plans for killing
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 Pulling taut his gold-worked bow
called Vijaya,
that immeasurably
self-confident hero
blanketed Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
with sharp arrows.

27 With two razor-sharp arrows
he killed
two Pāñcāla warriors,
Candradeva and Daṇḍadhāra,
who were
Yudhiṣṭhira's wheel-protectors.

28 These two heroic protectors
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
shome like the two Punarvasu planets
beside the moon.

29 Yudhiṣṭhira afflicted Karṇa
with thirty arrows,
and wounded Suṣeṇa and Satyasena
with three arrows each.

30 He shot ninety arrows at Śalya,
seventy three at Karṇa,
and three straight shafts each
at Karṇa's protectors.

31 With a *bhalla*-shaft Adhiratha's son Karṇa
splintered rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's bow,
afflicted him with sixty,
and roared victory.

32 Bursting with anger,
the leading Pāṇḍava heroes
rushed to defend
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and hemmed Karṇa in
with their arrows.

33 Sātyaki
Cekitāna
Yuyutsu
Pāṇḍya
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
Śikhaṇḍin
Draupadī's five sons
The Prabhadrakas

34 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
Bhīma, Śiśupāla's son,
the warriors of Kārūsa, Matsya,
Kekaya, Kāśi, and Kosala –

35 All these heroes attacked
Vasuṣeṇa-Karṇa.
The Pāñcāla hero Janamejaya.
assailed Karṇa

36 With *varāha-karṇa* boar-eared shafts
nārāca-arrows
nālīka-shafts
sharp *niśita*-arrows
vatsa-danta calf-toothed arrows
vipāṭha-shafts
razor-sharp arrows
caṭakāmukha-arrows

37 And various other fierce weapons.
Assisting him
on all four sides
was a huge force
of chariots, elephants
and cavalry.

38 O best of the Bharatas!
Karṇa of incalculable energy
killed ten leading
Cedi warriors.

39 O respectworthy monarch!
They fell
on all sides,
the arrows of Karṇa
carved with his name,
gold-feathered arrows,
shredding humans
and horses alike.

40 On that battlefield, singly,
Karṇa slaughtered the Cedi
chariot-heroes
and hundreds of Sṛñjaya warriors.

41 Karṇa's arrow-showers created
total darkness
on the earth.
It was impossible
to identify
enemy from friend.

42 In that frightening-for-Kṣatriyas'
total darkness,
mahā-muscled Karṇa killed
innumerable Kṣatriyas.

43 Valiant Karṇa
was the fire!
His arrows were
the shooting flames!
His valour
was the intense heat!
He was setting ablaze
the Pāṇḍava forest!

44 Mahārāja!
Then the mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Pāṇḍavas and the Sṛñjayas –
hundreds and thousands of them –
drowned the mahā-archer Karṇa
in showers of arrows
and encircled him.

45 The mahā-minded
mahā-archer Karṇa smiled
and thought of his mahā-weapons
and with his arrows
splintered the bow
of Indra-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira.

46 With ninety sharp curved knotted arrows,
Karṇa in an instant
shredded rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's armour.

47 It shattered, that gold-worked
gem-encrusted armour,
like a sun-shot cloud scattered
by gusts of wind.

48 Like the star-sprinkled night sky,
that beautiful gem-encrusted armour fell
from the body of Indra-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira.

49 Blood drenched
the armour-shorn body
of Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira . . .
Like the dawning sun
he looked –
arrow-struck
armour-shredded
finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira.

50 But his dharma
was that of a Kṣatriya –
and he stood there
resolute as a lion.
Angrily he hurled
a steel śakti-spear
at Adhiratha's son
Karṇa.

51 But Karṇa,
the mahā-archer,
sliced that flaming śakti
in mid-air
with seven arrows.
The fragments
of the shattered śakti
scattered
all over
the battlefield.

52 Targeting the two arms,
forehead and chest
of Karṇa with four
tomara-javelins,
Yudhiṣṭhira screamed
his leonine war-cry.

53 Blood streamed
from the body of Karṇa.
Hissing like a snake,
he shredded the war-flag
of Yudhiṣṭhira
with a *bhalla*-arrow
and wounded him
with three other shafts.

54 Yudhiṣṭhira shattered both quivers
and sundered Karṇa's chariot.
The Pāṇḍavas began raining arrows
on mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa.

55 Mahārāja! Sātyaki released fifty,
and Śikhaṇḍin
shot nine arrows at foe-crushing
Rādheya-Karṇa.

56 O rājā! Karṇa retaliated angrily
with three steel shafts
and five more,
wounding Sātyaki.

57 Next, Karṇa harassed Sātyaki
by targeting
his left arm with sixteen,
his right with three arrows,
and by wounding his charioteer
with seven arrows.

58 With four sharp arrows, the Sūtā's son
Karṇa despatched all four horses
of Sātyaki to the realm of Yama.

59 With a broad-headed *bhalla*-shaft,
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa
sliced Sātyaki's bow
and decapitated his charioteer.

60 Without horses, without charioteer,
Sātyaki stood in the chariot,
and hurled a *vaidūrya*-gemmed śakti
at Karṇa.

61 O Bharata descendant!
Finest of bowmen Karṇa
split in two the śakti
speeding towards him,

62 And with supreme self-confidence,
strength and skill
blocked the advancing
mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas.

63 Like a lion ravaging herds
of small animals,
Rādheya-Karṇa with his arrows
afflicted his enemies,

64 And with sharp knotted shafts
again attacked Yudhiṣṭhira.
Driven by horses
whose skins were white
as teeth,
and tails jet-balack,

65 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira galloped away
from the battlefield
to the safety of his camp.
The protector
of his rear chariot-defence
had already been killed.

66 Deeply anguished, he refused
to face Karṇa, and fled the field.
Radheya-Karṇa
pursued Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,

67 And with his hand – graced
with the auspicious signs
of lightning, umbrella, goad, fish, flag,
tortoise, lotus and other marks –
with his fair-skinned hand
he touched Pāṇḍu's son's

68 Shoulder, as if wishing
to purify himself by force.
Immediately he recalled
his promise to Kuntī.

69 That moment king Śalya said
to Karṇa:
"Karṇa! Don't touch
this excellent king.
He will pull you to him,
and reduce you to ashes
in the fire
of his anger."

70 O rājā! Karṇa burst
into peals of laughter,
and said, making fun
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Born a Kṣatriya,
where is your Kṣatriya-dharma?

71 What makes you run away
from the mahā-battle?
I think you do not know
what Kṣatriya-dharma is

72 Stick to your Brahma-power!
Study the Vedas!
Busy yourself with yajñas
and other rituals!
But, Kuntī's son,
give up fighting,
and forget what it is
to face heroes.

73 And don't you ever speak
unkind words about heroes.
Also, give up
fighting mahā-battles.
O respectworthy monarch!
If you must speak unkindly,
speak about others,
not me.

74 Revile me – and pay the price!
Go home, Yudhiṣṭhira. Send Krishna and Arjuna.

75 O rājā! There is no way
Karṇa will kill
a so-called man like you
on the battlefield."
Saying this, mahā-powerful Karṇa
released Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,

76 And started killing the warriors
of the Pāṇḍavas
like thunderbolt-wielding Indra
crushing the antigods.

77 O rājā! Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
shamefacedly
took to his heels.
Learning that rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
had fled the field,
the Cedis and Pāṇḍavas
and Pāñcālas,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki.

78 Draupadī's five heroic sons
and Nakula and Sahadeva
also followed
Yudhiṣṭhira
of undeteriorating fame.
Seeing Yudhiṣṭhira's army retreating,
Karṇa,
flushed with success,

79 Brave Karṇa pursued them
for some distance.
Bheri-drums, *mṛdaṅga*-drums,
the twanging of bows

80 Could be heard everywhere,
and the soldiers
of Duryodhana exulted
with leonine victory-shouts.
O Kaurava monarch!
Because his horses were tired,

81 Yudhiṣṭhira witnessed the prowess
of Karṇa, O maharaja,
from Śrutakīrti's chariot.
Seeing his army
getting decimated,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira said:

82 "What are you doing? Go,
and kill the enemy!"
Urged by the command
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the Pāṇḍava mahā-chariot-heroes
and Bhīma

83 Launched a counter-attack
against your sons.
O Bharata descendant!
The tumult that arose in the ranks

84 Of the chariot-heroes
and elephant-warriors
and horse-riders
and foot-soldiers!
And the din
of war-weapons!
"Stand up!"
"Kill!"
"March!"
"Attack!"

85 With these shouts, the warriors
began a mutual slaughter.
The arrows showered
created a dark shadow

86 Like huge clouds,
blotting the masses of soldiers
bent upon wounding
and killing each other.

87 Wounded and maimed they fell.
Deprived of pennants,
flags, umbrellas, horses, charioteers,
weapons, bodies . . .
Like toppling mountain peaks,
the magnificent elephants,

88 With their drivers killed,
collapsed, like mountain peaks
shattered by thunderbolts,
their armour disintegrated;
and thousands of splendidly
caparisoned horses

89 And valiant warriors
and riders also
collapsed with them. Also,
fell in that battle
on both sides armed soldiers,
horses and chariots

90 And foot-soldiers,
thousands of them,
littering the field of battle.
Large pink-eyed,
moon-and-lotus-lovely heads
of fallen warriors

91 Lay on the battlefield.
On earth
and in the sky
could be heard

92 The music and the songs
of apsarās
flying past
in their aerial chariots.
Hundreds of thousands
of those brave heroes
killed
on the battlefield

93 Were placed by the apsarās
in the flying chariots
and taken to heaven.
Seeing this mahā-wondrous spectacle,
and desirous
of going to heaven,

94 The soldiers began swiftly
slaughtering each other,
in a fury
of ecstasy.
Chariot-heroes
fought chariot-heroes,

95 Foot-soldiers fought foot-soldiers,
elephants fought elephants,
horses horses.
That elephant-horse-man-killing war

96 Raised clouds of dust
that obscured the field,
making soldiers kill
their own companions.
They dragged, bit,
and scratched each other,

97 Pummelled each other,
and wrestled with each other.
In this way
that elephant-horse-
and-human carnage
continued indiscriminately.

98 A river of blood streamed
from the corpses
of men, horses and elephants.
A battle
that exterminated elephants,
horses and humans!

99 That river of blood
carried away men,
horses and elephants –
a mahā-horror
of floating sticky slush
of flesh and marrow,

100 Instilling fear in the hearts
of the timid,
that gory mass of men,
elephants and horses.
Some, yearning for victory,
crossed that river,

101 Diving deep into its depth
and surfacing clear,
bobbing up and down,
their bodies, weapons
and uniforms daubed
with bright red blood.

102 O bull-brave Bharata!
So many drenched
in blood, drinking blood,
choked with blood!
Chariots, horses, men,
weapons, ornaments,

103 Uniforms, armours,
earth, sky, heaven, itself –
all of them
we saw
on that battlefield,
smeared with blood.

104 Smell, touch, rasa-taste –
    stench of blood!
Feel of blood,
    sight of blood,
gush of blood,
    everywhere crimson blood

105 Brought mahā-unease
    and terror
in the ranks of the soldiers.
    On that already
decimated army, Bhīma,
    O descendant of Bharata,

106 And Satyaki
    and other heroes
launched another attack.
    Witnessing the ferocity
of that assault
    by heroic warriors,

107 O rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
    the mahā-army
of your sons broke ranks
    and retreated.
Chariots, horses, humans,
    elephants scattered,

108 Seeing the advancing ranks
    of the enemy,
their armour and weapons
    cast aside,
their bows slipping
    from their hands;
they were like
    an elephant herd
fleeing from the charge
    of a jungle lion.

The Mahabharata of Vyasa

SECTION FIFTY

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
Seeing the Pāṇḍava warriors
advancing upon his army
from all sides,

2 Duryodhana shouted and ordered
his soldiers to stay firm,
but, O bull-brave Bhārata,
they refused to listen.

3 One wing of the army formation,
and another wing,
and Subala's son Śakuni and the Kauravas
led an attack on Bhīma.

4 Seeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
and other rajas fleeing,
Karṇa said to the Madra-rājā Śalya,
"Drive me near Bhīma's chariot."

5 Ordered by Karṇa, the Madra-lord
drove the excellent
haṁsa-swan-complexioned horses
towards Vṛkodara-Bhīma.

6 Mahārāja! Driven expertly
by illustrious-in-battle Śalya,
the horses sped towards Bhīma's chariot
in the thick of battle.

7 Bhīma saw Karṇa advancing
and, livid with anger,
he made up his mind, O bull-brave Bharata,
to kill Karṇa.

8 Turning to heroic Satyaki
and Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
he said, "Concentrate on protecting
Dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

9 I have just rescued him
from a near disaster.
He shredded our rājā's armour
and sliced his dress –

10 Ill-ātmaned Rādhā's son Karṇa
did that to please Duryodhana.
But today, O Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
I will end all our sorrows.

11 Either I kill Karṇa today
on the field of battle,
or he kills me in the gory duel.
I speak the truth.

12 Today I place the rājā's safety
in your hands.
No weakness now – spare no effort
to protect him."

13 Mahā-muscled Bhīma said this.
The sky reverberated
with his mahā-lion-roar as he advanced
towards Adhiratha's son Karṇa.

14 Seeing delighting-in-battle Bhīma
speedily advancing,
the Madra-lord Śalya said
to the charioteer's son Karṇa:

15 "There he is, O Karṇa!
The mahā-muscled Pāṇḍava
rushing at us, eager to let loose
his long-accumulated anger.

16 I have never seen him so incensed,
O Karṇa, not even
when Abhimanyu and the rākṣasa
Ghaṭotkaca were killed.

17 He glows like the flames
at the end of a yuga.
His anger is such that he
can challenge the three worlds."

18 O king (continued Sañjaya)
even as the Madra-lord
said this to Rādheya-Karṇa
Vṛkodara-Bhīma pressed forward.

19 Seeing delighting-in-battle Bhīma
advancing,
Rādhā's son Karṇa smiled
and said to Śalya:

20 "O lord of the people of Madra!
Vibho! Illustrious one!
You are right. Bhīma is advancing.
No doubt of that.

21 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
is heroic, valiant, and wrathful.
He is very powerful.
He does not fear for his life.

22 Relying on the strength of his arms
he lived in secret
in Virāṭa city,
and, eager to please Draupadī,

23 He disguised himself and killed Kīcaka
and Kīcaka's followers.
Today, anger-intoxicated,
he stands armed for battle –

24 But does he realise that he faces
Death itself
wielding the rod of doom?
For long have I wanted to kill

25 Arjuna, or be killed
by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Today, after I clash with Bhīma,
that wish will come true.

26 If I kill Bhīma or unchariot him,
Pārtha-Arjuna is sure
to attack me. Good!
This is what I want."

27 To these words
of limitlessly energetic Rādheya-Karṇa,
advising him to do
what he thought was best,

28 Śalya replied
to the son of a charioteer,
"O mahā-muscled one!
Attack mahā-powerful Bhīma.

29 Overcome him,
and then attack Phālguna-Arjuna.
The most cherished desire
of your heart –

30 I am telling you the truth, Karṇa –
will be achieved today."
Listening to Śalya's assurance,
Karṇa repeated:

31 "Either I kill Arjuna today
or Dhanañjaya-Arjuna kills me.
Steady your mind,
and drive me to Vṛkodara-Bhīma."

32 O lord of the earth! (said Sañjaya)
The mahā-powerful bowman Bhīma
became the goal
of Śalya's swiftly driven chariot.

33 O Indra-among-rājās!
A cacophony of drums and trumpets
heralded the clash
between Karṇa and Bhīma.

34 Boiling with anger,
powerful Bhīma attacked
your difficult-to-defeat army
with sharp *nārāca*-arrows.

35 O Indra-among-rājās! Mahārāja!
The clash that followed
between Pāṇḍava Bhīma and Karṇa
was deafening and horrendous.

36 O lord of the earth!
Swiftly the Pāṇḍava attacked.
Vaikartana-Karṇa saw Bhīma
rushing at him,

37 And shot *nārāca*-arrows
aimed at his chest.
Immeasurably self-confident Karṇa
drenched Bhīma with an arrow-shower.

38 Though wounded, Bhīma shot
nine sharp knotted and feathered arrows
that blocked
the advance of Karṇa.

39 With those feathered arrows
he sliced Karṇa's bow in two.
Splintering the bow,
he aimed at Karṇa's chest

40 *Nārāca*-arrows that shattered
his other weapons too.
With another bow, attacking Karṇa,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma

41 Aiming at Karṇa's vital parts,
O rājā, shot sharp arrows
at those very parts, and roared
his sky-shattering war-cry.

42 Karṇa replied with twenty-five
nārāca-arrows, like a hunter
felling an infuriated elephant
with flaming missiles.

43 His body mangled by arrows,
wild with anger,
eyes red with revengeful fury,
eager to kill Karṇa,

44 Pāṇḍava Bhīma fitted a mahā-swift,
heavy-burden-bearing,
mountain-sundering arrow
to his bow.

45 Reverberating like a thunderclap,
that arrow released by Bhīma
struck Karṇa
like lightning striking a mountain.

46 O finest of the Kauravas!
Struck by Bhīma,
the army general Karṇa fell
senseless in his chariot.

47 Blood drenched his body.
Foe-chastising Karṇa
lay there as if lifeless.
Seeing wolf-waisted Bhīma
rushing to slice Karṇa's tongue,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
appeased and warned him.

48 Śalya said:
"Mahā-muscled Bhīma!
Listen to my words –
for what I say is sensible.
And act on them.

49 Arjuna has vowed to kill valiant Kaṇa.
May you prosper!
Let the vow of Savyasācī-Arjuna
be fulfilled."

50 Bhīma replied:
"O excellent king!
I know the firm vow
of Pārtha-Arjuna.
But wicked Karṇa insulted Yudhiṣṭhira
in my presence.
My anger compels me.
I cannot think otherwise.

51 Rādheya-Karṇa is helpless, I know.
But anger grips me. I am firm.
I will rip out his tongue.

52 My dear maternal uncle!
Remember how this barbarous man
insulted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
in that gathering of rājās?

53 O lord of the earth!
You have guessed right
that I will rip out his tongue.
My one desire
is to slice his tongue.

54 I have waited till now
to please rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
Mahārāja!
Your sensible words today
I will accept
as bitter medicine.

55 If the vow
of dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
is broken,
he will give up his life.
If he does that,
what good will be our lives
and Keśava-Krishna's?

56 The instant he sees
diadem-wearing Kirīṭin-Arjuna today,
this wicked Karṇa
will realise his end has come.

57 This scoundrelly Karṇa
has already been burnt to ashes
in the wrath of Yudhiṣṭhira.
Good that you have stopped me today."

58 Seeing the mahā-radiant Karṇa
lying senseless in the chariot,
the lord of the Madras Śalya
drove him away from the battlefield.

59 With the defeat of Karṇa,
Bhīma assailed the huge army
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
like Indra attacking the Dānavas.

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 "A difficult feat indeed, Sañjaya,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"by which Bhīma made Karṇa
unconscious in his chariot.

2 My son Duryodhana
would often assure me,
'Karṇa singly will wipe out
the Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas.'

3 But tell me,
when he saw
Rādhā's son Karṇa
routed by Bhīma,
what did my son Duryodhana do?"

4 Seeing the charioteer's son
Rādheya-Karṇa retreat
(Sañjaya replied),
in that mahā-battle,
your son, mahārāja,
said to his brothers:

5 "May all go well with you!
Proceed swiftly
and rescue Rādheya-Karṇa.
He is drowning
in dire distress
out of fear of Bhīma."

6 Ordered by rājā Duryodhana,
they angrily rushed
to kill Bhīma, like insects rushing
into a blazing fire.

7 Śrutarva, Durdhara, Krātha,
Vivitsu, Vikaṭa, Sama,
Niṣaṅgī, Kavacī, Pāśī,
Nanda and Upananda;

8 Duṣpradharsa, Subāhu,
Vātavega, Suvaracā,
Dhanurgrāha, Durmada,
Jalasamdha and Śala and Saha;

9 All these mahā-powerful warriors,
with many chariots,
rushed at Bhīma and encircled him
on all sides.

10 They harassed him from all sides
with volleys of arrows.
O lord of men! Assailed by them,
mahā-powerful Bhīma

11 Swiftly destroyed fifty chariots
along with
fifty of your sons
in those chariots.

12 Mahārāja! Infuriated Bhīma,
with a *bhalla*-arrow,
sliced off the head of Vivitsu,
which fell,

13 Ear-ringed, crowned and moon-lovely,
on the ground.
Lord! *Prabhu*! Your sons,
seeing their brother killed,

14 Rushed upon valiant Bhīma
from all sides.
In that mahā-clash,
with two *bhalla*-arrows two more sons

15 Were killed by valiant Bhīma.
Two more lives lost!
Like two trees uprooted
in a fierce tempest,

16 They fell, O king, Vikata and Sama,
like two sons of gods.
Bhīma swiftly sent Krātha
to the abode of Yama.

17 With a *nārāca*-arrow
that toppled Krātha
on the ground. O lord of men!
Loud cries of "Hai! Hai!"

18 Were heard over the deaths
of your brave expert-in-bowcraft sons.
Their army panicked.
Mahā-powerful Bhīma

19 Despatched Nanda and Upananda also
to Yama's abode.
Your fear-stricken sons,
in total confusion, fled

20 From Bhīma, who seemed to be
like Kāla, like Antaka, like Yama.
Seeing your sons perish,
deeply grieving Karṇa

21 Urged his *haṁsa*-complexioned horses
to where Pāṇḍava Bhīma stood.
Mahārāja!
Driven by the Madra-rājā Śalya,

22 The horses advanced swiftly
towards Bhīma.
O lord of the world!
Fearful and confused

23 And horrendous was the encounter,
O mahārāja,
between Karṇa and the Pāṇḍava. Mahārāja!
Seeing those mahā-chariot-heroes

24 Clash face-to-face, I was curious
about the result.
War-proud Bhīma
with his feathered arrows shrouded

25 Karṇa in the very presence
of your sons, mahārāja.
Infuriated Karṇa,
with nine knotted steel arrows,

26 Weapons-expert Karṇa cornered
and wounded Bhīma.
Injured by them, fiercely valiant
mahā-muscled Bhīma

27 Pulled his bow ear-taut,
and targeted Karṇa with seven arrows.
Hissing like a venomous snake,
mahārāja, Karṇa

28 Drenched Pāṇḍava Bhīma
with a shower of arrows.
With a counter-shower Bhīma clouded
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,

29 And in the presence of the Kauravas
mahā-powerful Bhīma roared his war-cry.
Incensed Karṇa
gripped his bow firmly

30 And shot ten stone-sharpened
kaṅka-feathered arrows at Bhīma.
He sliced Bhīma's bow
with a *bhalla*-arrow.

31 Mahā-muscled Bhīma, eager to kill Karṇa,
hurled at Karṇa a *parigha*-spiked-iron club,
resembling the rod of the god of death,
and roared as he did so.

32 Seeing that lightning-swift spiked club
thundering towards him,

33 Karṇa disintegrated it
with a venomous snake-arrow.
Then, holding a tremendously strong bow,
Bhīma

34 Shrouded with arrows
his foe-crushing foe Karṇa.
A gruesome duel took place
between Karṇa and the Pāṇḍava,

35 Resembling a fight to the death
between two lions.
Mahārāja! Shooting three arrows
at Bhīma, Karṇa

36 Bloodied Bhīma with the power
of his ear-taut bow.
Wounded by Karṇa, the incomparable
bow-expert hero Bhīma

37 Fitted a fearful arrow
capable of shredding Karṇa's body.
Piercing his armour and flesh,
that arrow

38 Slid into the earth
like a snake into an ant-hill.
O rājā! Bewildered and numbed
by that fierce attack,

39 Karṇa swayed, like a hill
in an earthquake.
Then, mahārāja,
driven by revengeful anger, Karṇa

40 Fired twentyfive *nārāca*-arrows
at the Pāṇḍava.
With another volley of arrows
he pinned down Bhīma,
and with a special arrow
he shredded Bhīma's flag.

41 With yet another arrow, a *bhalla*,
he killed
the charioteer of Bhīma.
With a feathered shaft
he shredded the war-bow
of the Pāṇḍava.

42 O Indra-among-rājās!
In an instant, Karṇa, smiling,
uncharioted
the fearful-deed-doer Bhīma.

43 O finest of the Bharatas!
Unchārioted Bhīma,
swift as the wind, picked up a mace
and leapt down from the chariot.

44 O lord of the earth!
Leaping down, Bhīma laid waste
your warriors, like a storm
in autumn scattering clouds.

45 O rājā! Foe-crushing Pāṇḍava Bhīma
in his fury slaughtered
seven hundred elephants with tusks
as large as ploughshares.

46 Powerful Bhīma killed them
by targeting their temples,
their frontal globes, eyes, gums
and other weak parts.

47 They were trying to flee
in sheer panic,
even as their drivers tried to ring Bhīma,
as clouds do the sun.

48 But, like Indra smashing mountains
with his thunderbolt,
Bhīma with his mace destroyed
all seven hundred of them,
including their drivers,
weapons and flags.

49 Next, foe-crushing Bhīma exterminated
fifty-two of Śakuni's huge elephants.

50 Harassing your army, Pāṇḍava Bhīma
smashed a hundred chariots
and killed hundreds
of foot-soldiers.

51 The scorching sun above,
and mahātmā Bhīma on the field –
and your army shrivelled
like leather curling in a blaze.

52 O finest of the Bharatas!
Dreading Bhīma,
your soldiers scattered
in all the ten directions.

53 But five hundred chariot-heroes,
splendidly caparisoned in coat-of-mail,
shouted and rained arrows
on Bhīma.

54 Like Viṣṇu killing the anti-gods,
Bhīma with his mace
slaughtered the five hundred –
drivers, flags, weapons, all.

55 Then, on orders from Śakuni,
three thousand horsemen,
respected by brave warriors,
brandishing *śakti*-spears,
ṛṣti-swords and *prāsa*-darts,
swooped upon Bhīma.

56 Seeing them galloping furiously
in his direction,
Bhīma resorted to skilful
zig-zag manoeuvring,
and with his mace slaughtered
horses and riders alike.

57 O Bharata descendant!
Like trees shattered by rocks
were horse-riders and horses
smashed by the mace of Bhīma.

58 After killing the three thousand
splendid horses of Śakuni,
Bhīma, in another chariot,
attacked Rādheya-Karṇa.

59 O rājā! In the meantime
foe-crushing Karṇa
attacked Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and killed his charioteer.

60 Seeing the driver-less chariot
careening on the field,
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa fired
kaṅka-feathered arrows at it.

61 Infuriated by Karṇa's pursuit
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the wind-god's son Māruti-Bhīma
enveloped Karṇa
with a deluge of arrows blotting
earth and sky.

62 Foe-vanquishing Karṇa
turned his chariot back
and harassed Bhīma on all sides
with sharp arrows.

63 O Bharata descendant!
Manoeuvring his chariot
alongside the chariot of Bhīma,
supremely confident Sātyaki
began his attack on Karṇa
who was harassing Bhīma.

64 Despite Sātyaki's arrow-shower,
Karṇa continued
to pursue Bhīma.
Both were bull-brave bowmen,

65 Dedicated heroes shooting dazzling arrows
at each other.
O Indra-among-rājās!
It was indeed an awesome darshan –

66 A net of arrows covering the sky
like flocks of cranes.
O rājā! The sun, the directions,
the sub-directions

67 Could not be seen,
blocked by that net of arrows.
Friend could not make out friend,
nor foe foe.

68 O rājā! The mahā-radiance
of the midday sun
was tempered by the arrow-showers
of Karṇa and Bhīma.
Subala's son Śakuni, Kṛtavarman,
Droṇa's son Drauni-Aśvatthāman,
Adhiratha's son Karṇa
and Kṛpa –

69 Seeing them battling the Pāṇḍavas,
the Kaurava warriors rallied,
O lord of the earth;
the deafening tumult

70 That resulted resembled the wild roaring
of rain-swollen oceans.
In that mahā-battle,
facing each other,

71 The two warring sides exulted
in mutual slaughter.
When the sun reached
its midday peak,

72 They were locked in a battle
never seen or heard of before.
Like a torrent of water
rushing into the ocean,

73 One division of warriors
rushed into another.
The noise of the shouting heroes
as they clashed

74 Was like the roar
of many oceans intermingling.
The two armies,
clashing with fierce force,

75 Were like two rivers
merging into one torrent.
O lord of the earth!
Horrendous was the collision.

76 Between the glory-seeking
Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas.
A confused medley of shouts
was heard,

77 O rājā, O Bharata descendant,
as the heroes called out
each other's names.
Ridiculing, in battle, father, mother;

78 Or praising someone's character –
I saw the heroes
on the battlefield
behave in this manner and,

79 O rājā, I was afraid,
and I thought:
This is the end for them;
their life is over.
Seeing those anger-driven,
energetic heroes,

80 My fear increased. I thought:
What will happen now?
O rājā! The mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Pāṇḍava
and Kaurava armies
continued to assault
each other's ranks
with sharp arrows.

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 Mahārāja! (continued Sañjaya)
Spurred by hatred
to mutual slaughter,
the Kṣatriyas continued the battle.

2 Mahārāja! Chariots, horses, men
and elephants,
in countless numbers,
clashed on the battlefield.

3 *Gadā*-maces
parigha-spiked iron clubs
kaṇapa-spears
prāsa-barbed darts
bhindipāla-slicers
bhuṣuṇḍi-pellet ejecters –

4 We saw them all
in that horrendous clash.
A rain of arrows fell
like a swarm of cocasts.

5 Elephants clashed
with elephants
with murderous ferocity.
Horse-riders
attacked horse-riders.
Chariot-heroes
fought chariot-heroes.

6 Foot-soldiers
faced foot-soldiers.
Horses and chariots and elephants
in a confused frenzy . . .

7 O rājā! The three army forces
swiftly decimating
each other, the heroes killing
and screaming –

8 They butchered each other
like wild animals.
O Bharata descendant!
The earth was crimson with blood

9 Like a field in the monsoon
with red *śakragopa*-beetles,
or like the white dress dyed
with red turmeric

10 Of a young dark-skinned girl –
such was the earth.
The flesh-and-blood-smeared field
was a golden spectacle.

11 O Bharata descendant!
Countless
Sliced off heads
Trunks
Arms
Thighs
Broken ornaments

12 Golden breast-plates
Corpses of brave bowmen
Shields
War-flags
Lay scattered heap upon heap
On the battlefield.

13 O king! Elephants tore
into elephants with tusks.
A wondrous spectacle
of embedded tusks!

14 Blood streaming on their bodies,
the wounded elephants
were a startling spectacle
of moving hills
drenched with liquid red minerals
during the monsoon.

15 Many of these elephants caught
the *tomara*-lances
hurled at them;
gripping them in their trunks,
they roamed the field,
twisting and snapping them.

16 O rājā! Their trappings and armour
ripped apart
by *nārāca*-arrows,
these magnificent elephants
looked like cloudless hills
in autumn.

17 O descendant of Bharata!
Pierced by golden-feathered arrows,
these magnificent elephants
looked like
mountain peaks struck
by shooting stars.

18 Felled by elephants
of the enemy forces,
some hill-huge elephants
toppled,
liked winged mountains
falling.

19 Mutilated by arrows
and in agonising pain,
some elephants panicked
and fled, or collapsed,
their tusks and temples
thudding on the ground.

20 O rājā!
Some roared like lions.
Some trumpeted and screamed
in terrible pain,
running wildly in circles
here and there.

21 Decorated with golden trappings,
countless horses,
pierced by arrows,
stumbled, fell,
or fled
in all ten directions.

22 Others, wounded by
tomara-lances, dragged
on the field by elephants,
fell,
writhing and screaming
in agony.

23 O respectworthy monarch!
And the men fell too
and, seeing their relatives,
their fathers and grandfathers,
the wounded heroes wailed
piteously.

24 O descendant of Bharata!
Still others,
seeing fellow-warriors fleeing,
called out to them,
shouting their own names
and *gotra*-lineage.

25 Mahārāja!
Gold-ornamented arms,
sliced by enemies,
fell on the field –
so many of them –
twisting, twitching, writhing.

26 Thousands of such arms
fell on the field,
and some seemed suddenly
to leap up
like so many five-headed fierce
pannaga-snakes.

27 O lord of the earth!
Smeared with sandalpaste
and dripping with blood,
they looked so lovely,
like golden flags
flapping in the wind.

28 And so the gruesome battle
raged on all sides,
and the warriors killed
one another,
not even knowing
who they were killing.

29 For everywhere, O rājā,
was blinding dust,
a storm of dust raised
by the chashing weapons; –
impossible to tell
who was killing who.

30 And so the battle took
a grisly form,
and mahā-frightening
mahā-rivers of blood
began to flow
on the battlefield.

31 Heads
the rocks
Hair
the weeds and moss
Bones
the fishes
Arrows and bows and maces
the boats

32 Flesh and blood
the mud . . .
Horrible
Horrendous
Rivers of blood
flowing on the field.

33 They disgusted the timid
and delighted the brave.
The fearful rivers flowed
to the abode of Yama.

34 They struck terror in the hearts
of Kṣatriyas.
Whoever plunged in them,
drowned in them.
O tiger-among-men!
Roaring flesh-eating beasts

35 On the battlefield made it
as awesome as
the realm of the rājā
of the spirits of the dead.
Countless headless bodies stood
upright on all sides.

36 O descendant of Bharata!
And hosts
of flesh-eating creatures
sucking blood and marrow
began dancing
an ecstatic dance of death.

37 O rājā! Feeding on fat
and marrow and flesh,
crows and vultures
and cranes exulted
and flew wild
in the sky.

38 O rājā! The warriors, however,
shook off
the difficult-to-overcome fear
of death,
and keeping the warrior's vow
fearlessly fought on.

39 Lord! Descendant of Bharata!
So many warriors
on the battlefield kept shouting
their own names,
their fathers' names and *gotra*-lineage
to each other.

40 O lord of the earth!
Even as they did so,
many of the warriors attacked
with *śakti*-spears
and *tomara*-lances
and *paṭṭisa*-pointed spears.

41 Arrows and *śakti*-spears
and hosts
of flesh-eating creatures
and valiant warriors
displaying their prowess
on the battlefield . . .

42 Like a battered ship floundering
on the ocean,
the Kaurava ranks,
shorn of their strength,
faltered on that fearful,
horrific battlefield.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 O respectworthy monarch!
(continued Sañjaya)
In that dreadful war
of Kṣatriya-carnage,
sounded the mahā-deafening twang
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow.

2 O rājā! Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
was busy exterminating
the Saṁśaptakas, the Kosalas
and the Nārāyaṇīs.

3 The infuriated Saṁśaptakas,
eager to win,
attacked from all sides,
showering the head
of Pārtha-Arjuna
with volleys of arrows.

4 But Pārtha-Arjuna,
with incredible strength,
neutralised that arrow-downpour,
O rājā,
and slaughtered
many splendid chariot-warriors.

5 Butchering the chariot-heroes
with stone-sharpened
kaṅka-feathered arrows,
Pārtha-Arjuna next
attacked the leading chariot-warrior
Suśarmā.

6 That excellent chariot-warrior
released a shower of arrows,
and the Saṁśaptakas
blocked the advance
of Pārtha-Arjuna
with volley upon volley of shafts.

7 With ten arrows
Suśarmā wounded Pārtha-Arjuna;
with three he struck
Janārdana-Krishna's right arm.

8 O respectworthy monarch!
With a *bhalla*-arrow
he shredded their war-flag.
O rājā!
The war-flag's mahā-*vānara,*
created by Viśvakarman,

9 Let loose
a horrendous mahā-roar.
Hearing the scream of the simian
on the war-flag,
your army was on the verge
of near panic.

10 So terrified were the warriors
they were petrified
and stood as if senseless.
O king!
So paralysed were the soldiers
of your army

11 They looked like so many flowers
in the garden
of Caitraratha.
O finest of the Kauravas!
Soon enough, however,
they recovered consciousness,

12 And rained on Arjuna
a shower of arrows
like clouds on a mountain.
Swiftly, they encircled
the mahā-chariot
of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

13 Defying a counter-shower
of sharp arrows,
they kept screaming
and attacking.
O respectworthy monarch!
Concentrating
on the horses, the chariot wheels,
and the axle,

14 Thousands of warriors
ringed the chariot,
shouting leonine war-cries
as they did so.

15 Flaming with anger,
the hosts of Saṁśaptakas
blocked the chariot.
Some of them seized
the two mahā-muscular arms
of Keśava-Krishna.

16 Some others, mahārāja,
excitedly caught hold
of Pārtha-Arjuna.
Jerking his arms free
on the field of battle,
Keśava-Krishna

17 Felled his assailants
like a wild elephant
throwing down its riders.
Boiling with anger
in that mahā-chariot,
Pārtha-Arjuna

18 Saw Keśava-Krishna
surrounded and harassed.
Immediately
he pushed off
the foot-soldiers clambering
on the chariot.

19 The others he restrained
with special arrows
designed for close combat.
Shrouding the Saṁśaptakas
with arrows,
he said to Keśava-Krishna:

20 "O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Look at them –
these cruel Saṁśaptakas,
dying in their thousands!

21 O bull-brave Yādava!
There is none in the world except me
who can repulse a chariot-attack
by an enemy at such close quarters."

22 Saying this,
dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
blew on his Devadatta conch.
And Krishna blew
on his Pāñcajanya.
Earth and sky shook
with the reverberations.

23 Mahārāja! The Saṁśaptakas
heard the blare
of the conches, trembled,
and prepared to retreat.

24 Mahārāja!
Destroyer-of-heroic-enemies
Pāṇḍava Arjuna invoked
the Nāga-missile
to immobilise
the legs of their horses.

25 Immobilised by Pāṇḍu's
mahā-ātmaned son,
they stood still,
like so many stone statues.

26 Then Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
began his slaughter
of the petrified warriors
like Indra
slaughtering Daityas
in the war with Tārakā.

27 In the fierce carnage
that followed,
with Arjuna raining arrows
on them,
the Saṁśaptakas flung away
their weapons
and scattered,
fleeing from Arjuna's mahā-chariot.

28 O king! Their legs
were paralysed too.
No matter how hard they tried,
they could not move.
Pārtha-Arjuna slew them
with knotted arrows.

29 Whoever Pārtha-Arjuna targeted
with the feet-
paralysing weapon
on the battlefield
found his legs tightly
entwined by snakes.

30 O Indra-among-rājās!
Seeing his army
petrified in this way,
the mahā-chariot hero
Susarma invoked
the Sauparṇa-missile.

31 And lovely-feathered
Suparṇa-vultures materialised!
They dived down
and devoured the snakes!
The snakes, O king,
slithered away in fear.

32 O lord of the earth!
The Saṁśaptaka army,
feet freed of the snakes,
shone as splendid
as the life-giving sun
freed from clouds.

33 O respectworthy monarch!
Once freed, the warriors
recommenced their deluge
of arrows and missiles
on the chariot
of Phālguna-Arjuna.

34 They wounded him
with a variety of weapons.
Neutralising their torrent
of arrows
with a deluge
of his own mahā-weapons,

35 Vāsavi-Arjuna, Indra's son,
destroyer of heroic enemies,
killed the warriors.
O rājā!
This time, Suśarmā,
with knotted arrows,

36 Pierced Arjuna
in the chest,
and wounded him
with three more.
In deep pain Arjuna slumped down
in his chariot.

37 And the warriors screamed,
"Pārtha-Arjuna is dead!"
And conches blared
and *bheri*-drums sounded,

38 And other instruments too,
and leonine war-cries . . .
But white-horse-vehicled
Śvetavāhana-Arjuna,
Krishna-charioted Arjuna
recovered,

39 And in a flash
he released
the Aindra-missile.
O respectworthy monarch!
From that missile
thousands of arrows
suddenly materialised

40 And sped
in all directions
seeking their victims
in your army,
slaughtering hundreds
and thousands
of horses and horsemen
and charioteers –

41 A butchery that spread terror,
O Bharata descendant,
in your ranks of Saṁśaptakas
and Nārāyaṇi-Gopālas.

42 There was not one man there
to oppose Arjuna.
In the very presence
of all those heroes,
Arjuna continued his massacre
of your army.

43 An entire army reduced
to senselessness!
None to display prowess!
All ripe for death
at the hands
of Pāṇḍava Arjuna who,

44 Mahārāja, killed ten thousand,
and shone on the field
like a smokeless flame.
O Bharata descendant! Fourteen thousand foot,

45 Ten thousand chariot,
and three thousand
elephant Saṁśaptakas remained,
and these now
re-grouped and surrounded
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

46 Vowing, "Either he dies
or we die."
O lord of the earth!
A gruesome clash
took place between your army
and Kirīṭin-Arjuna –

47 A clash in which
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna
annihilated his enemies
in the same way
as Śakra-Indra destroyed
the anti-gods.

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 O respectworthy monarch! (said Sañjaya)
Kṛtavarman, Kṛpa, Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
the charioteer's son Karṇa, Ulūka,
Subala's son Śakuni, rājā Duryodhana, his brothers,

2 Seeing the Kaurava army
sinking like a boat
in an ocean,
demoralised by their fear
of the Pāṇḍavas,
rushed to its rescue.

3 O Bharata descendant!
The clash that ensued
was so horrendous
that it terrified the cowards
and exhilarated
the hearts of the heroic.

4 The shower of arrows
released by Kṛpa
settled like a swarm
of locusts
on the teeming ranks
of the Sṛṁjayas.

5 Propelled by wrath,
Śikhaṇḍin swiftly
assailed the bull-brave Brahmin,
the Gautama descendant Kṛpa
with a counter-shower
of arrows.

6 Mahā-expert in the use
of weapons,
infuriated Kṛpa neutralised
the attack,
and wounded Śikhaṇḍin
with ten arrows.

7 O rājā! For a while
the fearful clash
between them
resembled the encounter
between anger-driven Rāma
and Rāvaṇa.

8 In a fit of rage,
Śikhaṇḍin strung
seven straight *kaṅka*-
feathered arrows
and seriously wounded
agitated Kṛpa.

9 Badly lacerated,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Brahmin Kṛpa
deprived Śikhaṇḍin
of his horses, charioteer
and chariot.

10 Leaping free
from his chariot,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Śikhaṇḍin,
sword and shield in hand,
attacked the Brahmin.

11 A wonderful spectacle!
Seeing him speeding,
Kṛpa used curved
and knotted arrows
to obscure
the advancing Śikhaṇḍin.

12 O rājā!
It was incredible!
As incredible as rocks
flying in the sky!
Śikhaṇḍin stood
in the field, paralysed!

13 O finest of kings!
Seeing Śikhaṇḍin paralysed
by Kṛpa's arrows,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Dhṛṣṭadyumna rushed
to his rescue.

14 Seeing Dhṛṣṭadyumna
speeding to the chariot
of Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Kṛtavarman advanced
to intercept him.

15 Simultaneously
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
saw Yudhiṣṭhira
and Yudhiṣṭhira's son attacking
Śāradvat-Kṛpa's chariot,
and he intercepted them.

16 O descendant of Bharata!
Your son Duryodhana
with a shower of arrows
swiftly cut off
the advancing mahā-chariot-heroes
Nakula and Sahadeva.

17 And Vaikartana-Karṇa
blocked the advance of Bhīma
and the armies
of the Karūṣas,
the Kekayas,
and the Sṛñjayas.

18 O respectworthy monarch!
Impelled by the desire
to reduce him to ashes,
as it were,
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa
shot arrows at Śikhaṇḍin.

19 Whirling his sword
again and again,
Śikhaṇḍin sliced
the gold-filigreed arrows
targeted at him
by Kṛpa.

20 O descendant of Bharata!
Gautama-Kṛpa sliced
the hundred-moon-decorated shield
of Śikhaṇḍin
with his arrows.
A roar of applause reverberated.

21 Mahārāja!
Without his shield,
worsted by Kṛpa,
like a sick man tottering,
Śikhaṇḍin faltered,
brandishing his sword.

22 O rājā!
Seeing Śikhaṇḍin hard pressed
by the arrows of Kṛpa,
Citraketu's mahā-powerful son
Suketu
rushed to his rescue.

23 Showering with arrows
the Brahmin Gautama-Kṛpa,
supremely confident Suketu
advanced towards his chariot.

24 O finest of rājās!
Seeing the strict-vowed Brahmin
Kṛpa locked in battle
with Suketu,
Śikhaṇḍin quickly
fled the field.

25 O rājā! Suketu wounded Kṛpa first
With nine, then seventy, then three arrows.

26 O respectworthy monarch!
After slicing Kṛpa's bow
and quiver,
Suketu grievously wounded
Kṛpa's charioteer.

27 Incensed, Gautama-Kṛpa
strung a new
excellent bow,
and with thirty arrows
pierced the vulnerable parts
of Suketu's body.

28 Drained of energy
Suketu trembled
in his chariot,
like a tree
swaying heavily
in an earthquake.

29 In a flash, Kṛpa shot
a razor-sharp arrow
that severed the swaying head
of Saketu
with its glittering earrings,
crown and head-dress.

30 O rājā!
That head –
It fell on the field
Like a chunk of meat
From the beak of a hawk.
The headless body
Thudded on the ground.

31 Maharājā! Suketu dead,
his followers fled
in all the ten directions,
leaving Gautama-Kṛpa
alone on the field.

32 O descendant of Bharata!
Surrounding
the mahā-chariot-hero Dhṛṣṭadyumna
on the battlefield,
Kṛtavarman shouted passionately,
"Wait! Wait!"

33 O king! Like two hawks
fighting fiercely
over a slice of meat –
those two heroes,
Kṛtavarman and Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
fought on the field.

34 Infuriated Dhṛṣṭadyumna
wounded Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman
in the chest
with nine arrows.

35 Severely wounded
Kṛtavarman,
attacked by
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
shrouded
the chariot and horses
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
with a volley of arrows.

36 O rājā! His chariot obscured
by Kṛtavarman's arrows,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
could no longer be seen,
like the sun hidden
behind rain-dark clouds.

37 Though wounded, O mahārāja,
with his gold-feathered
arrows Dhṛṣṭadyumna dispelled
Kṛtavarman's arrow-shroud,
and emerged
resplendent.

38 Commander of the army,
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
swiftly drove
alongside Kṛtavarman,
and deluged him
with a gory arrow-shower.

39 Kṛtavarman saw that gruesome
arrow-shower coming.
He stood firm;
with a thousand arrows
he neutralised
the approaching shafts.

40 Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
saw his arrow-shower
neutralised by the counter-shower
of Kṛtavarman;
but he succeeded in blocking
Kṛtavarman from advancing.

41 With a sharp *bhalla*-arrow
shot swiftly
he sent Kṛtavarman's charioteer
to the abode of Yama.
The charioteer toppled
from the vehicle.

42 In a fit of anger
that flamed
like a violent fire,
Kṛtavarman launched
an indiscriminate attack
on the Pāṇḍava forces.

43 O rājā! In reply,
brandishing a mace,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna rushed upon
the mahā-bowman.
Kṛtavarman
on the battlefield.

44 Dazed by the surprise move
of the brave hero,
wounded Kṛtavarman
fell down unconscious.
Śrutarvas took him to safety
in his chariot.

45 In this way,
powerful Dhṛṣṭadyumna defeated
his mahā-powerful enemy,
and proceeded next
to check the advance
of the Kaurava forces
with a continuous shower
of arrows.

46 But your warriors,
not disheartened,
roaring their war-cries,
sped towards Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
What followed next
was another blood-curdling battle.

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 Sañjaya continued:
O rājā! Seeing Yudhiṣṭhira
well protected
by Śini's grandson Sātyaki
and Draupadī's sons,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman delightedly
attacked Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Dexterous in the employment
of war-weapons,
displaying amazing bowcraft
and chariot-skills,
schooting stone-sharpened
gold-feathered arrows,
Aśvatthāman proceeded
to attack Yudhiṣṭhira.

3 Charging his celestial weapons
with mantras,
in the offensive against Yudhiṣṭhira,
he filled the sky
with arrows shot
from his mahā-missiles.

4 The arrow-swarm completely shrouded
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman also.
The vast battlefield became
a conglomeration of arrows.

5 O finest of the Bharatas!
The sky
was not a sky any more.
It became
a golden network dome
of arrows.

6 O rājā! A golden arrow-net
blanketed the sky,
like masses of clouds
darkening the firmament.

7 An incredible sight!
The entire sky a sheet of arrows!
We stood and saw and marvelled.
Impossible for any
winged creature
to fly in that sky!

8 Not Sātyaki,
not Pāṇḍu's son
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
not any of the warriors
could display their prowess
under that sky.

9 Mahārāja! Seeing the dexterity
of Droṇa's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
were spellbound.

10 The rājās
were blinded
by the lustre
of Aśvatthāman
shining like the sun.
Seeing their army
on the defensive, Draupadī's
mahā-chariot-hero sons,

11 Sātyaki, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and the Pāñcāla forces reorganised.
Abandoning fear of death,
they swooped on Droṇa's son.

12 Sātyaki wounded
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
with twenty-seven arrows;
and again
with seven gold-filigreed sharp
nārāca-arrows.

13 Yudhiṣṭhira shot
seventy-three arrows
at Aśvatthāman;
Prativindhya-seven;
Śrutakarman three;
Śrutakīrti seven;

14 Sutasoma nine;
Śatānīka seven.
And many other warriors
attacked from all sides.

15 O rājā! Sighing like a provoked
venomous snake,
Aśvatthāman struck Sātyaki
with twenty-five arrows;

16 Śrutakīrti with nine;
Sutasoma five;
Śrutakarman eight;
Prativindhya five;

17 Śatānīka nine;
Dharmaputra Yudhiṣṭhira five.
Other warriors he wounded
with two arrows each,

18 And he sliced Śrutakīrti's bow
with super-sharp arrows.
The mahā-chariot-hero Śrutakīrti
readied another bow

19 And wounded Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
first with three arrows
and then fired a volley
of very sharp shafts.
O respectworthy mahārāja!
Showering arrows, Aśvatthāman

20 Blinded the Pāṇḍava forces,
O bull-brave Bharata.
After this, Aśvatthāman,
supremely self-confident,
faced Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and splintered his bow.

21 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman smiled,
and wounded him
with three more arrows.
O rājā!
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
picked up a mahā-bow

22 And wounded Droṇa' son
Aśvatthāman in his chest
and both arms with seventy arrows.
Furious Sātyaki
saw Droṇa's son terrorising
the battlefield

23 And shattered his bow
with a sharp half-moon arrow.
Discarding
the splintered bow,
śakti-imbued Aśvatthāman
hurled a śakti-lance

24 At Sātyaki's charioteer,
hurtling him
from the vehicle.
Celebrated-for-valour
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
readied another bow

25 And, O descendant of Bharata,
shrouded Śini's grandson Sātyaki
with an arrow-shower.
His charioteer killed,
Sātyaki's horses panicked
on the battlefield.

26 O descendant of Bharata!
They ran wild, helter-skelter.
On that finest
of arms-experts Aśvatthāman,
Yudhiṣṭhira
and the other Pāṇḍavas

27 Released a downpour
of sharp arrows
at tremendous speed.
Seeing them attack
so wrathfully on the field,
tormentor-of-foes

28 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
smiled and faced them
in that mahā-clash.
The army was a bundle
of hay and dry grass!
The arrows were hundreds
of flaming sticks!
The mahā-chariot-hero

29 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman lit
that fierce forest-fire!
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman assailed
the sons of Pāṇḍu

30 Like a *timi*-whale agitating
the waters of the sea.
O incomparable Bharata!
O mahārāja!
Seeing that magnificent feat
of Droṇa's son,

31 All thought the Pāṇḍavas
were doomed.
The mahā-chariot-hero Yudhiṣṭhira
turned to Droṇa's pupil;

32 With passion and revenge
motivating him,
he said to Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman:
"I know you are the finest
of the valiant,
the mahā-powerful, the deterous,
and the arms-expert.

33 But only if you demonstrate
your strength
against Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
I do not think
you are the Brahmin hero
you claim to be.
You have no love,
you have no gratitude,

34 Your valour will vanish
when you face foe-crushing
Pṛṣata's-son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
I do not think
you are the Brahmin hero
you claim to be.
You have no love, you have
no gratitude,

35 O tiger-among-men, seeing that
you want to kill me.
A Brahmin's duties are tapasyā,
self-control, charity, study.

36 A Kṣatriya's duty
is to wield the bow.
You are a fake Brahmin.
O mahā-muscled one!
I will wipe out the Kauravas
in front of your eyes.

37 Do your best! You are a shame
of a Brahmin!"
Mahārāja! Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
heard this, and smiled.

38 And he wondered what to say,
and did not know
what to say.
He kept quiet.
Then, showering Pāṇḍava-Yudhiṣṭhira
with arrows,

39 He flamed in anger,
like Antaka-Yama
annihilating all creatures.
O respectworthy monarch!
Assailed by the arrow-shroud
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,

40 Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira fled,
leaving the ranks
of his army.
With the retreat
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
from the battlefield,

41 O rājā, mahā-minded Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman also left.
O rājā! Avoiding Droṇa's son,
Yudhiṣṭhira proceeded
to another part of the field
for fresh cruel slaughter.

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 After this (continued Sañjaya)
Vaikartana-Karṇa
blocked the advance of Bhīma
who was protected
by the Pāñcāla, Cedi
and Kekaya warriors.

2 Even as Bhīma watched,
Karṇa killed
many mahā-chariot hero Cedis,
Kārūṣas and Sṛñjayas.

3 Ignoring the finest
of chariot-heroes Karṇa,
Bhīma concentrated
on the Kauravas,
like a fierce forest-fire reducing
dry grass to ashes.

4 And Karṇa the charioteer's son
also started slaying
thousands of mahā-bowmen
Pāñcālas, Kekayas and Sṛñjayas.

5 Pārtha-Arjuna slew
the Saṁśaptakas;
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
slew the Kauravas;
Karṇa the Pāñcālas –
three mahā-chariot-heroes.

6 O rājā!
All those Ksatriyas –
exterminated by three heroes –
three heroes
as fatal as fierce flames!
So many doomed
as a result
of your wrong policy!

7 O finest of the Bharatas!
Infuriated Duryodhana
with nine arrows
wounded Nakula
and the four horses
of Nakula's chariot.

8 O lord of men!
With a razor-arrow
your supremely self-confident son
Duryodhana
shredded the golden war-flag
of Sahadeva.

9 Roused-to-wrath Nakula,
O rājā,
with seven arrows,
and Sahadeva with five,
attacked your son
Duryodhana.

10 Both of these excellent Bharatas
were among bowmen
the most brilliant.
Your angry son Duryodhana
grazed their chests
with five arrows each.

11 O rājā! He sliced their bows
with two
bhalla-arrows,
and then wounded them
with a volley
of twenty-one shafts.

12 The twins then readied
two bows as lovely
as the bow of Śakra-Indra.
On the battlefield
the heroes looked as handsome
as the sons of gods.

13 Like two mahā-clouds
raining torrents
on a mountain,
these two energetic twins
showered fearful arrows
on their cousin-brother Duryodhana.

14 Mahārāja! Your mahā-chariot-hero son
Duryodhana,
in a burst of anger,
blocked the advance
of Pāṇḍu's twin sons
with a volley of arrows.

15 O descendant of Bharata!
At that time, only his bow
stretched to full maṇḍala-circle
was visible; his arrows
sped through the field
like dazzling sunrays;

16 They covered all the directions –
arrows and arrows everywhere!
At that time,
when arrows
seemed to totally obscure
the sky itself,

17 The twins Nakula and Sahadeva
saw your son
as Kāla-Antaka-Yama –
doom personified!
Witnessing your son's valour,
the mahā-chariot-heroes

18 Were certain they were watching
the impending deaths
of Mādrī's twin sons.
O rājā! The general
of the Pāṇḍava armies,
mahā-chariot-hero

19 Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
advanced to where
rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana
was stationed.
Bypassing Mādrī's brave twins,
both mahā-chariot-heroes,

20 Dhṛṣṭadyumna targeted
your son Duryodhana
with his arrows.
Your supremely
self-confident son,
roused to revenge,

21 Your bull-brave son,
smiled and shot
twenty-five arrows
at Dhṛṣṭadyumna of Pāñcāla.
Again, your supremely self-confident,
revengeful son

22 Wounded Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
prince of the Pāñcālas,
with sixty-six arrows
and roared in triumph.
Then, O respectworthy monarch,
his bow and finger-guards

23 Also were sliced
by rājā Duryodhana
with a sharp razor-edged arrow.
Discarding the broken bow,
the enemy-scorching Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna

24 Quickly readied a more flexible
and formidable bow.
Eyes bloodshot,
blood trickling down his body,
like a dazzling flame
he stood and moved –

25 That refulgent mahā-bow-wielder
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Fifteen sharp
narācā-arrows,
hissing fiercely
like Pannaga serpents,

26 Were shot by Dhṛṣṭadyumna
determined to kill
finest-of-Bharatas Duryodhana.
Piercing the armour of gold
of rājā Duryodhana,
the stone-sharpened arrows,

27 Peacock-plumed
and *kaṅka*-feathered,
slid into the earth
Mahārāja! At that time
your grievously wounded son
looked as resplendent

28 As a flaming *kiṁśuka* tree
full of flowers in springtime.
Pierced his armour,
his body debilitated
by the volley
of *nārāca*-arrows,

29 Nonetheless in his rage
he cut Dhṛṣṭadyumna's bow
with a *bhalla*-arrow.
O lord of the earth!
After splintering the bow
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

30 Rājā Duryodhana aimed
ten arrows between
the eyebrows of his enemy.
Those arrowsmith-polished shafts
enhanced the lustre
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna's face

31 Like so many honey-seeking
black bees
on a full-blown lotus.
Mahā-minded Dhṛṣṭadyumna
flung aside
his smashed bow,

32 And quickly fitted another
with sixteen *bhalla*-arrows.
With five
of these arrows
he slew Duryodhana's charioteer
and horses,

33 And with a single *bhalla*
he disintegrated
his gold-ornamented bow.
The fully-equipped chariot,
royal umbrella, *śakti*-spear, sword,
mace and war-flag

34 Of your son Duryodhana
were destroyed
by the remaining ten *bhallas*
of Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
The gold-bracelet-decorated,
elephant-symbolled, gem-encrusted

35 Resplendent flag of Duryodhana
reduced to tatters –
all the kings witnessed this.
O rājā! Swiftly,
Daṇḍadhāra,
in his chariot

36 Spirited easily to safety
lord-of-men Duryodhana,
under the very eyes
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Weapon-less Duryodhana

37 Was protected
on the battlefield
by his brothers.
Seeking rājā Duryodhana's welfare,
defeater-of-Sātyaki
mahā-powerful Karṇa

38 Rushed to confront
the slayer of Droṇa,
the brilliant-in-bowcraft
Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
swiftly pursued Karṇa

39 Like an elephant bent
on piercing a rival
with its tusks. O Bharata!
It was a mahā-clash
between those two
mahā-ātmaned combatants –

40 Between Karṇa
and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
on that mahā-battlefield.
Not one Pāṇḍava warrior,
not one of our warriors
turned his face away from battle.

41 Karṇa launched his attack
on the Pāñcālas.
O finest of men!
That was when
elephants and horses
and men

42 Of both armies, O rājā,
were exterminated mercilessly
on the battlefield.
Mahārāja!
Hoping for victory,
the Pāñcāles

43 Swooped upon Karṇa
like birds
rushing to their nests.
Infuriated
and bent on victory,
Adhiratha's son Karṇa

44 Selectively and systematically
targeted with his arrows
the adventurous heroes:
Vyāghraketu, Suśarman,
Citra, Ugrayūdha,
and Jaya;

45 Śukla and Rocamāna
and the difficult-
to-defeat Siṁhasena.
All these heroes,
swiftly manoeuvring
their chariots

46 Towards infuriated,
finest-of-warriors Karṇa,
rained their arrows on him.
But, O Indra-among-men,
all were wounded valiantly
from a distance –

47 All eight of them – by the sharp arrows
of Rādhā's son Karṇa. Mahārāja!
The celebrated-for-valour
son of a charioteer

48 Killed thousands of brilliant-
in-battle warriors.
Jiṣṇu
Jiṣṇukarman
Devāpi
Bhadra

49 O rājā!
Daṇḍa
Citra
Citrāyudha
and Hari
on the battlefield
and Siṁhaketu
Rocamāna
and the mahā-chariot-hero
Śalabha –

50 All these Cedi mahā-chariot-heroes
were wiped out
by Adhiratha's son Karṇa
whose body,

51 Smeared with their blood,
glowed like Rudra-Śiva's mahā-body.
O Bharata! Afflicted by Karṇa's arrows,
the war-elephants

52 Fled in fear,
spreading mahā-panic
on the battlefield.
Assailed
by the arrows of Karṇa
in that clash,

53 They trumpeted and screamed
and fell like mountain peaks
shattered by lightning.
Elephants, horses
and humans,
as well as

54 Chariots littered the earth
in the wake
of Karṇa's chariot.
Not Bhīṣma,
not Droṇa,
not any of your warriors

55 Equalled the feat
of Karṇa in that battle.
Elephants and horses and chariots –
the charioteer's son Karṇa

56 Massacred them all,
including humans, O mahārāja,
in that mahā-clash.
Like a lion
fearlessly terrorising
a herd of deer,

57 Karṇa moved fearlessly
among the Pāñcālas.
Like a lion
scattering
a herd of deer
in all directions,

58 Karṇa broke up
the ranks
of the Pāñcāla chariots.
Like a deer
fatally trapped
in the jaws of a lion,

59 Whichever mahā-chariot-hero
came near Karṇa
could not return alive.
Like men fatally trapped
in the flames
of a Vaiśvānara-fire,

60 So the Sṛñjayas, O Bharata,
were consumed
in the Karṇa-conflagration.
O Bharata-descendant!
Many Cedi, Kekaya
and Pāñcāla

61 Heroes – acknowledged heroes –
were called out by name
and slaughtered by Karṇa.
O rājā!
I witnessed
that valiant feat of Karṇa,

62 And I realised then
not a single Pāñcāla
would be able to escape
from Adhiratha's son.
The charioteer's son
simply butchered the Pāñcālas.

63 Seeing the Pāñcālas over-killed
by Karṇa
in that mahā-battle
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
in a burst of anger
advanced towards him.

64 O respectworthy monarch!
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and Draupadī's sons
and hundreds of other heroes
faced the foe-exterminating
son of Rādhā.s

65 Śikhaṇḍin
Sahadeva
Nakula
Nakula's son Śatānīka
Janamejaya
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
Many Prabhadrakas –

66 Led by infinitely energetic Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
advanced
towards arrow-showering Karṇa,
brandishing weapons and missiles.

67 But Karṇa singlehanded
fell upon the Cedis
Pāñcālas
and Pāṇḍavas –
Adhiratha's son fell on them
like Garutmān-Garuḍa
swooping
on a clutch
of Pannaga-serpents.

68 O lord of the earth!
That gruesome encounter
between them and Karṇa
was like the clash
in the ancient past between
the gods and the Dānavas.

69 Like the single sun dispelling
multitudinous darkness,
Karṇa all by himself
scattered the mahā-bowmen
who shot volley upon volley
of arrows.

70 While Karṇa was clashing
with the Pāṇḍavas,
infuriated Bhīma,
shooting arrows
that resembled the rod of Yama,
god of death –

71 Mahā-bowman Bhīma,
looking magnificent on the field,
assailed the Bāhlīkas,
Kekayas, Matsyas,
Vāsatīyas, Bhadras
and the Sindhu warriors.

72 Bhīma, brilliant bowman,
attacked singlehanded,
with glorious success.
Struck by the *nārāca*-arrows
of Bhīma
in their vital parts, elephants,

73 With their riders, toppled
and fell dead.
The impact shook the earth.
Their riders killed,
countless horses
as well as foot-soldiers,

74 Lacerated and dazed,
vomiting blood,
collapsed on the field.
Thousands of chariot-heroes,
unchArioted,
unweaponed,

75 Lay on the field, some dead,
some bewildered
by their fear of Bhīma.
Corpses littered the field.
Terrorised by Bhīma,
some stood there petrified;

76 The army of Duryodhana,
debilitated,
demoralised, wounded,
confused and helpless,
was a mass of paralysis
on the mahā-battlefield.

77 O king!
Stunned and still your army –
as motionless
and calm
as the ocean
after ebb-tide.

78 Confidence and valour
and strength and pride –
all of these vanished,
and the army
of your son Duryodhana
lost all its glory.

79 O finest of the Bharatas!
In that confusion,
in that mutual slaughter,
the soldiers of your army
were bathed
in streams of blood;

80 A terrible mutual slaughter,
O finest of the Bharatas!
Burning with anger
on the battlefield,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
assailing the Pāṇḍavas,

81 And Bhīma assailing
the Kauravas –
an enthralling spectacle!
In that horrible
and wonderful slaughter
on the field of battle,

82 In another part,
finest-of-victorious-warriors Arjuna
killed a host
of Saṁśaptakas
in the thick of battle,
and said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

83 "O Janārdana-Krishna!
The ranks of the Saṁśaptakas
have been pierced
in a mahā-clash.
The mahā-chariot-hero Saṁśaptakas
are fleeing the field,

84 Like deer before
a roaring lion.
My arrows have demoralised them.
In this mahā-battle,
even the mahā-force of the Sṛñjayas
is breaking apart.

85 O Krishna! I can see
the elephant-emblemed war-flag
of Karṇa fluttering.
Intelligent Kaṇa is roaming
wherever he likes
in the ranks of the rājās.

86 O Krishna! You know how strong
Karṇa is,
what a mahā-chariot-hero he is.
His śakti is such
other chariot-heroes
are no match for him.

87 Let us drive to where Karṇa
is crushing our warriors.
Leave everything!
Let us go to where
that mahā-chariot-hero
son of a charioteer is.

88 I can only suggest this,
O Krishna.
You decide what must now be done."
Govinda-Krishna
heard this suggestion,
and smiled,

89 And said to Arjuna,
"Son of Pāṇḍu,
kill the Kauravas quickly."
Urged by Govinda-Krishna,
the horses penetrated
that mahā-army;

90 They were pure white
like *haṁsa*-swans, two of them,
and the riders were Krishna
and Pāṇḍava Arjuna
The gold-harnessed white steeds,
driven by Keśava-Krishna,

91 Went straight through your army,
which made way
by retreating in all four directions.
That *vānara*-bannered chariot,
clattering
like thunder-clouds,

92 Pennants flapping in the breeze,
pierced through
the army ranks
like a celestial vehicle.
Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna
pierced the mahā-army

93 With eyes red with anger,
looking mahā-radiant and glorious.
Brilliant-in-battle
and accepting the challenge
of the warriors, they entered
the field of battle,

94 Like the twin Aśvin. gods
entering a yajña-enclosure
when invited
by the sacrificial priests.
Those two enraged tigers-among-men
rushed in

95 Like two elephants rushing
in a mahā-forest,
enraged by the claps of hunters.
Phālguna-Arjuna
rode into the ranks
of chariots and horses

96 Like Antaka the god of death
roaming about
with his fatal noose.
O Bharata descendant!
Seeing the courageous hero
in the thick of his army,

97 Your son organised a squad
of Saṁśaptakas
to attack him.
Three hundred
war elephants,
a thousand chariots,

98 Fourteen thousand horses, and two
hundred thousand crack foot-soldiers,

99 All brave, al expert in aiming, with
the Saṁśaptaka and mahā-chariot-heroes,
obscured Kuntī's son Arjuna

100 With such an arrow-deluge
that Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
was completely hidden,
O mahārāja.
Covered by those arrow-volleys,
enemy-exterminator

101 Pārtha-Arjuna revealed himself
as horrendous-ātmaned
noose-wielding Antaka-Yama
the god of death
slaughtering the Saṁśaptakas –
a sight to see!

102 Diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna
shot a volley
of lightning-like,
gold-filigreed arrows
that obscured
all the sky.

103 *Prabhu*! Lord!
Diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna
ceaselessly shot
those arrows that fell
on all sides
like swarms of snakes.

104 Pāṇḍava Arjuna
of illimitable self-confidence
shot volley upon volley
of golden-feathered,
sharp-pointed
and curved and knotted arrows.

105 All who heard thought
Pārtha-Arjuna's handclaps
sounded as if
earth, ocean, mountains,
sky, all the directions
were simultaneously exploding.

106 In no time at all,
the mahā-chariot-hero
son of Kuntī slaughtered
ten thousand Saṁśaptakas,
and swiftly forged
his offensive strategy.

107 Like Vāsava-Indra assailing
the Dānava anti-gods,
Pārtha-Arjuna targeted
with his arrows
the army wing commanded
by the king of Kāmboja.

108 With his *bhalla*-arrows
he sliced
the thighs, the arms,
the heads of his foes,
and disintegrated
their weapons as well.

109 Limbless, weapon-less,
one by one
they toppled on the field,
like many-branching trees
unbranched and uprooted
by a storm.

110 Sudakṣiṇa's younger brother,
the ruler of Kāmboja
targeted with his arrows
the elephant-
horse-chariot-and-warrior destroyer
Arjuna.

111 With two half-moon arrows
Arjuna sliced
the handsome *parigha*-mace-like arms
of his enemy,
and with a razor arrow he cut off
his full-moon-lovely head.

112 Spurting streams of blood,
he toppled
from his chariot, like a peak
of the Manaḥśila
crashing down,
struck by a thunderbolt.

113 They saw him fall.
They saw him lying dead
on the field –
Sudakṣiṇa's younger brother,
the ruler of Kāmboja,
the ruler with eyes
as lovely as lotus-petals,
this ravishingly handsome man

114 Lying there like a shattered
golden mountain peak.
And then it started again –
that horrible wonderful battle.

115 A fortune-dominated battle,
with the fates
of the soldiers always uncertain.
Slaughtered one by one,
the horses of the Kāmbojas,
Yavanas and Śakas,

116 Bespattered with blood,
crimsoned the battlefield,
O lord of the earth!
Chariots and charioteers,
horses and horse-riders
were destroyed,

117 As well as elephants
and their drivers.
Mahārāja!
What a mahā-carnage it was –
this ceaseless
mutual slaughter!

118 With one wing after another
of the Saṁśaptakas
exterminated by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman decided
to attack superb Arjuna.

119 Brandishing his mahā-bow
and fearful arrows,
all gold-filigreed,
he appeared on the scene
like the sun
with its dazzling rays.

120 Overflowing with wrath,
inspired by revenge,
open-mouthed and red-eyed,
he was like Death, angry,
armed with the *kiṅkara*-rod
at the time of doom.

121 Mahārāja!
Immediately he started
showering volley upon volley
of arrows
on the Pāṇḍava ranks,
savagely afflicting them.

122 O respectworthy monarch!
O lord of the earth!
He saw Dāśārha-Krishna
in the chariot,
and deluged him
with fearful arrows.

123 Mahārāja! That arrow-swarm
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
fell on Krishna
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and completely obscured them
from view.

124 That was how valiant
Aśvatthāman,
shooting hundreds
of sharp arrows,
unnerved Mādhava-Krishna
and Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

125 Seeing those two protectors
of all moving and unmoving life
swamped
with arrows,
all creatures exclaimed,
"Hai! Hai!"

126 And the Siddhas
and the Cāraṇas,
anxious about the welfare
of the world,
arrived there
from all directions.

127 O rājā! Never before
did I witness
such wondrous valour
as was shown by Aśvatthāman
when he shrouded the two Krishnas
on the battlefield.

128 O rājā! Again and again
I heard
in that battle the fearful twang
of Drauṇi-
Aśvatthāman's bow,
like a lion roaring.

129 As he roamed the field,
shooting arrows,
right and left, the string
of Aśvatthāman's bow
flashed like lightning
through masses of clouds.

130 Dexterous Arjuna was,
and firm of hand he was,
yet seeing
the son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
was nonpulssed.

131 He felt his own mahā-fame
was threatened
by the brilliance of Aśvatthāman
who, O rājā,
was truly a peerless performer
on the battlefield.

132 O Indra-among-rājās!
In that mahā-clash
between Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
and Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
the mahā-powerful son of Droṇa
excelled

133 Kuntī's son Arjuna,
and this infuriated Krishna.
O rājā! Breathing heavily,
his eyes aflame,

134 He kept glancing
at Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
and Phalguna-Arjuna
as if consuming them.
Finally, Krishna pleasantly
said to Pārtha-Arjuna:

135 "Arjuna!
    Where is your valour?
What has happened
    to the strength of your arms?
Are you sure
    you are holding the Gāṇḍīva bow?
Are you sure
    this is your chariot?

136 Very strange, Pārtha-Arjuna,
Very strange – what I am seeing now.
O descendant of Bharata! Droṇa's son
Seems to be the better man today.

137 Are both your arms
    in proper order?
Is your fist
    a little flabby or what?
I see Droṇa's son
    surpassing you in battle.

138 O bull-brave Bharata!
Forget he's your guru's son.
Pārtha-Arjuna! This is no time
to wait and watch!"

139 No sooner had he finished
    than Arjuna
shot fourteen *bhalla*-arrows
    which pierced the bow
and damaged the chariot
    of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,

140 Shredded his flag
    and royal umbrella,
pennants, sword, śakti-lance
    and mace.
He wounded Aśvatthāman's neck
    with calf-toothed arrows.

141 Mahārāja! Wounded in the shoulder,
Aśvatthāman,
almost fainting,
clutched the flagpole for support.
Seeing him grievously wounded
by his enemy,

142 Aśvatthāman's charioteer
sped him away
from Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
In the meantime,
the enemy-tormentor
Vijaya-Arjuna,

143 In the very presence
of your valiant son,
O descendant of Bharata,
slaughtered hundreds
and thousands
of your army's warriors.

144 O rājā!
This vicious slaughter
of your warriors
by their enemies
was the result
of your wrong policy.

145 And Kaunteya-Arjuna
slaughtered the Saṁśaptakas,
and wolf-waisted
Vṛokadara-Bhīma
slaughtered the Kauravas,
and Karṇa the Pāñcālas.

146 O rājā!
Even as that gory battle
continued in full fury,
one could see
countless headless trunks
erect on the battlefield.

147 O finest of the Bharatas!
  Yudhiṣṭhira, wounded
and in agonising pain,
  stayed in safety
about two *kṛośas* away
  from the battlefield.

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 O bull-brave Bharata! (said Sañjaya)
  Duryodhana went to Karṇa
and said to Madra's rājā Śalya
  and other rulers:

2 "Karṇa! The time has come.
  The door of heaven has opened.
Lucky the Kṣatriyas
  who will fight now.

3 Son of Rādhā! Good fortune
  is the result
when heroic Kṣatriyas fight
  other heroic Kṣatriyas.

4 Fight the Pāṇḍavas.
Kill them.
Enjoy their wealth and kingdom.
Or die
At the hands of your enemies,
And go to the realm
  where dead heroes go."

5 The bull-brave Kṣatriyas
heard the words
of Duryodhana
and they shouted
and sounded
their musical instruments.

6 Seeing the warriors loyal
to Duryodhana
in such ecstatic spirits,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
added to their joy,
saying:

7 "In front of all of you,
and in front
of the entire army,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna killed my father
who had laid down
his weapons.

8 O lords of the earth!
For revenge
and for the sake of my friend
Duryodhana,
I make this promise today –
listen to me!

9 I will not remove
my armour today
without killing Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
If what I say is a lie,
let me never
enter heaven!

10 I will exterminate
with my arrows
anyone who faces me today –
be he Arjuna
or Bhīma
or any other warrior."

11 Inspired by these words
of Aśvatthāman,
all the Kaurava descendants
of Bharata
attacked the Pāṇḍavas,
who instantly retaliated.

12 A horrific encounter
it was, O rjā!
The Kauravas and Sṛñjayas
witnessed a slaughter
resembling the doom
at the end of a yuga.

13 And gods and apsarās
and hosts of others
came there to witness
the indiscriminate killing
that was ceaselessly waged
on the field of battle.

14 On the brilliant heroes
performing their duty
on the field of battle,
the apsarās showered
perfumes and jewels
and celestial garlands.

15 And the fragrance was wafted
by the wind to the warriors
on the field of battle,
and pleasured by the fragrance
they fought and they died
on the field of battle.

16 And the field of battle
was a star-studded sky
that glittered with garlands
and gold-feathered arrows
vividly colourful
shot by the warriors.

17 What a noise that was
on the field of battle! –
the paeans from the sky,
the musical instruments,
the thunder and clatter
of the wheels of the chariots.

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 A mahā-carnage took place
(continued Sañjaya).
Arjuna and Karṇa and Bhīma
were livid with anger.

2 O rājā! Having routed
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
and other mahā-chariot-heroes,
Arjuna said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

3 "O mahā-muscled Krishna!
See –
the Pāṇḍavas are routed –
they are retreating.
Karṇa is slaughtering
our mahā-chariot-heroes
on the battlefield.

4 O Dāśārha-Krishna!
Where is Dharmarāja?
I do not see Yudhiṣṭhira anywhere.
O finest-of-warriors Krishna!
I cannot see the war-flag
of Dharmarāja anywhere.

5 Janardana-Krishna!
A third of the day is left.
Not a single son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is challenging us.

6 If you really wish me well,
drive me to where Yudhiṣṭhira is.
If I see Dharmaputra and his brothers
are safe and secure on the battlefield,

7 I will re-start my attacks
on my enemies.
As desired by dreadful-deed-doer
Bibhatsu-Arjuna,
Hari-Krishna manoeuvred
the chariot

8 Where rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sṛñjayas
were engaged in battle.
having made up their minds
to fight to the death
if that was necessary.

9 Reaching that spot
where a massive carnage
was taking place,
Govinda-Krishna turned
to Savyasācī-Arjuna
and said:

10 "Pṛthā-Kuntī's son!
Look at this mahā-horrifying
slaughter of the Bharatas
and other Kṣatriyas of the world –
all because of Duryodhana.

11 O Bharata descendant!
Look at the litter
of priceless gold-backed bows
of expert bowmen
all lying dead
on the battlefield.

12 Look at the arrows –
gold-filigreed-and-feathered,
curved and knotted,
oil-polished *nārāca*-shafts –
lying there like snakes
come out of their holes.

13 O Bharata descendant!
Flung aside carelessly,
look at the gold-
worked *prāsa*-barbed-darts,
the *śakti*-lances,
the *jāmbu*-river-gold-
worked paṭṭisa-spears,
the massive maces!

14 Look at the gold-
filigreed swords
with ivory handles
and the gold -
embossed shields
lying on the ground.

15 Gold-worked *ṛṣṭi*-swords
gold-decorated javelins
and *paraśu*-axes
with golden handles . . .

16 Iron *kunta*-lances
heavy *musala*-clubs
śataghni-pellet-ejectors
giant *parigha*-iron-clubs –
look at them!

17 And look at all the *cakra*-discuses
the *tomara*-javelins used in this mahā-war!
Lusting for victory
still clutching their weapons and missiles –

18 Look at all the soldiers
all dead yet looking alive!
Their heads smashed
by the thudding blows of maces,

19 Or reduced to pulp
by elephants and horses
and chariot-wheels –
look at these
thousands of dead warriors!
Men, horses, elephants
killed by arrows
śakti-spears
ṛṣṭi-swords
paṭṭiṣa-javelins

20 Golden *parigha*-spiked iron clubs
huge-sized *kunta*-lances
and *paraśu*-axes –
their bodies mangled and bloodied –

21 Lifeless lumps of flesh
covered the battlefield.
Sandalpaste-smeared,
golden-*aṅgada*-armlet-adorned,

22 Sliced-off arms
littered the ground;
and chopped-off thighs
as handsome as elephant tusks;
and decapitated heads adorned
with *cūḍāmaṇi*-crest jewels . . .

23 What a wonderful spectacle
beautifying the earth!
Shattered earrings too
lay scattered on the field,

24 And hands with finger-protectors
of so many large-eyed warriors . . .
Necks sliced
limbs lacerated
and dripping blood –
the bodies of the warriors

25 Appeared on the field
to be the charred remains
of a smokeless fire.
The shattered remains too
of chariots once tinkling
with golden *kiṅkiṇi*-bells,

26 Their horses slain by arrows,
with guts and marrow
oozing out on the field . . .
Anukarṣa-chariot-axles,
upāsaṅga-chariot-fixtures,
pennants, vivid war-flags,

27 And white mahā-conches
of the charioteers
lay like rubbish on the field.
Their tongues ripped out and bleeding,
hill-huge elephants
slept an eternal sleep.

28 Enchanting Vaijayanti-war-flags
shredded,
horses and elephants butchered.
Elephant trappings,
deerskin seats and blankets
ripped to pieces . . .

29 The exquisite trappings studded
with silver stars,
the goads, the shattered bells
litter the field
beside the corpses
of the huge elephants.

30 Countless beautiful goads
with *vaidūrya*-lapis lazuli handles
lie on the ground,
along with golden whips
still gripped
by the charioteers' sliced hands.

31 Gold-filigreed and gem-inlaid
raṅku-deerskin coverings
for horses' backs
now cover the earth.

32 Gem-encrusted crowns of all
those Indras-among-men,
beautiful gold necklaces,
royal umbrellas,
yak-tail fly-whisks
and *vyajana*-palmleaf fans . . .

33 Radiant like the moon,
scintillating like the stars,
dazzling with earrings,
the handsome
bearded-and-moustached faces of heroes
are sprawled all over the field,
smeared with a mix
of mud and blood.

34 Look
at their mud-and-blood-caked faces!
Look at those barely alive,
groaning and moaning,

35 Grievously wounded,
O lord of the earth,
surrounded by their relatives
who have cast aside
their weapons,
and are weeping piteously.

36 Those who have succumbed
to their injuries
are covered with sheets
while their comrades,
eager for victory,
brimming with anger
swiftly advance again
to the battlefront.

37 Still others are running
helter-skelter on the battlefield,
looking for water
pitifully begged by dying relatives.

38 So many, Arjuna, so many
perish on the field
before their desperate relatives
bring them the water.
When they arrive,
and see them lifeless,

39 They throw away the waterpots
and run about,
wailing and screaming.
O respect-deserving Arjuna!
See! Some take a few sips,
and fall back dead.

40 So many dearly-loved relatives,
bereft
of their loved ones,
are roaming
the field disconsolately,
like the living dead.

41 O finest of men!
Look at all these warriors
biting their lips
and staring vacantly
with wide-open eyes
and curved eyebrows."

42 Saying this,
Krishna and Arjuna
proceeded on the field
to where king Yudhiṣṭhira
was stationed,
to have his darshan.

43 Arjuna kept repeating
to Govinda-Krishna,
"After you, after you."
Giving him a darshan of the field,
Mādhava-Krishna
said to Pārtha-Arjuna:

44 "Pāṇḍava Arjuna!"
Speaking slowly
and proceeding unhurriedly,
he added: "Pārtha-Arjuna!
See, so many rājās
are there ahead of us.

45 And see, over there!
Karṇa, like a flame
dominating the battlefield
centre-stage.
And Bhīma the mahā-bowman,
returning to the field.

46 And, along with Bhīma,
the Pāñcālas, Sṛñjayas
Pāṇḍavas and Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
all brilliant warriors –
are also returning
to the field of battle.

47 Pārtha-Arjuna, these Pāṇḍavas
have smashed the feet
of the mahā-powerful Kauravas,
and Rādhā's son Karṇa
is desperately trying to stop
their panicky retreat.

48 O Kaurava Arjuna!
Finest-of-weapons-wielders Aśvatthāman,
whose prowess
equals that
of Antaka-Yama and Śakra-Indra,
is also proceeding there.

49 The mahā-chariot-hero Dhṛṣṭadyumna
is speedily pursuing
Aśvatthāman.
Look! So many Sṛñjaya warriors
have already perished
on the battlefield."

50 O rājā!
Difficult-to-defeat Vāsudeva-Krishna
said all this
to diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna.
Then recommenced
the mahā-gory battle.

51 All the warriors then vowed
to fight
to the death.
Roaring their war-cries,
they screamed challenges
at each other.

52 O rājā!
O lord of the earth!
It was your wrong policy
that led
to this carnage
of your warriors and their foes.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Once again (continued Sañjaya)
the Kauravas and Sṛñjayas clashed,
fearlessly,
Yudhiṣṭhira led the army
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
and Karṇa the charioteer's son, ours.

2 A horrible, horripilating clash
between Karṇa and the Pāṇḍavas
that increased the population
of the realm of Yama!

3 O descendant of Bharata!
Blood had flowed
like water on the field;
only a hundful
of valiant Saṁśaptakas
had survived.

4 Now, mahārāja, Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
reinforced
by all the rājās
and the mahā-chariot-hero Pāṇḍavas
launched his offensive
against Karṇa.

5 Like a mountain accepting
torrents of rain,
Karṇa stood firm, alone,
against those warriors
filled with excitement
and lusting for victory.

6 Clashing against Karṇa,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
were scattered by Karṇa
like rivulets of rain
splashing off the slopes
of a mountain.

7 Mahārāja! A horripilating clash
took place then.
With knotted arrows Dhṛṣṭadyumna
assailed Radhā's son Karṇa,

8 Shouting on the field, "Wait! Wait!"
Shaking his incomparable bow Vijaya,
the mahā-charict-hero Karṇa,

9 In a fit of rage, sliced the bow
and venomous-snake arrows
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
followed by a fresh volley of nine arrows.

10 O defectless rājā!
Shredding the golden armour
of mahā-ātmaned Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
smeared with blood,
they looked like lovely red
śakragopa-beetles.

11 Casting aside his shattered bow,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
readied a new one,
and with fatal
snake-venom arrows –

12 Knotted arrows –
seventy of them –
he assailed Karṇa.
O rājā! Karṇa retaliated
against scorcher-of-his-enemies
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

13 By drenching him with arrows
that sped like deadly serpents.
Enemy-of Droṇa,
the mahā-bowman Dhṛṣṭadyumna
wounded Karṇa
with sharp arrows.

14 Mahārāja!
In a fury of anger
Karṇa released
a golden arrow
that resembled
the rod of Death.

15 O rājā! O lord of the earth!
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
saw the fearful arrow speeding
and with expert aim
he disintegrated it midway
into a hundred pieces.

16 O lord of the earth!
Seeing that arrow fragmented
by the shafts
of Sātyaki,
Karṇa arrow-shrouded Sātyaki
from all sides,

17 And with seven *nārāca*-arrows
he wounded Sātyaki,
but Śini's grandson,
not outdone,
assailed him
with gold-filigreed shafts.

18 Mahārāja!
The gory clash
that took place then
was something
for eyes to see
and ears to hear.

19 O king! Wilnessing that spectacular
encounter between Karṇa
and Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
all on the battlefield horripilated.

20 In the meantime,
the supremely mahā-powerful
son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
advanced towards
the foe-conquering-and-crushing
son of Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

21 Hostile-city-destroyer
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
shouted angrily:
"Wait! Brahmin-killer! Wait!
You will not escape
with your life today!"

22 With these words,
he swiftly shrouded
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
with a volley
of grisly-looking, sharp,
radiant arrows.

23 Dhṛṣṭadyumna tried his best
to thwart the attack
of the mahā-chariot-hero.
O respectworthy monarch!
On the field of battle,
seeing Pṛṣata's son
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Droṇa thought

24 His time of death had come –
so foe-exterminating Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
seeing Aśvatthāman,
felt his death had come.

25 Imagining themselves
to be invulnerable
to all war-weapons,
they swiftly attacked
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
like Kāla
the Spirit of Cosmic Time
attacking Kāla
the Spirit of Cosmic Time
at the time
of the dissolution
of the cosmos.

26 O Indra-among-rājās!
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
saw Dhṛṣṭadyumna facing him.
He sighed;
livid with anger
he attacked
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

27 Mahārāja!
Seeing each other
face to face
infuriated both of them.
Droṇa's valiant son
Aśvatthāman said

28 Quickly to Dhṛṣṭadyumna
who, O lord of the earth,
was in front of him:
"Pāñcāla scoundrel!
Today I will send you
to your death.

29 The vicious crime you committed
by killing Droṇa –
that crime of the past
will haunt you today
and make you repent –
as all ill deeds do.

30 You fool!
Listen to this truth
from me!
If Arjuna
does not protect you
if you
do not flee the field,
then you will today
die at my hands."

31 Valiant Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
replied to Aśvatthāman:
"My sword will reply
to you today –

32 The same reply it gave
your father fighting
so hard on the battlefield.
If I could kill Droṇa,
a Brahmin only in name,

33 What can prevent me
from killing you today?"
Mahārāja!
Saying this,
the revenge-motivated
general of the army

34 Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
attacked Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
with a volley
of sharp arrows.
This infuriated Droṇa's son.
With knotted arrows,

35 Mahārāja, he shrouded his foe
on all sides.
Such was the swarm upon swarm
of arrows
that the sky and the directions
were all obscured,

36 Mahārāja,
and the thousands upon thousands
of warriors on the battlefield
could not be seen.
O rājā! War-glorious Aśvatthāman,
by Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

37 Was darkened with arrows,
and witness to this
was the charioteer's son Karṇa.
Mahārāja!
The Pāñcālas, the Pāṇḍavas –
by Rādhā's son Karṇa,

38 Handsome Karṇa, all by himself –
Draupadī's five sons,
Yudhāmanyu,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Sātyaki –
all were prevented by Karṇa
from advancing.

39 In that clash,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna sliced the bow
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.
Throwing away
the shattered bow
and picking up another,

40 Swift and agile Aśvatthāman
fitted
venomous-snake-poison arrows to it,
and, O Indra-among-rājās,
in no time at all,
the bow, *śakti*-spear, mace, war-flag,

41 Horses, charioteer, chariot
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
all were destroyed by Aśvatthāman.
Bow shattered,
chariot smashed,
horses and charioteer killed,

42 Dhṛṣṭadyumna picked up
a massive sword
and a hundred-moon-embossed shield.
O Indra-among-rājās!
The *bhalla*-wielding
mahā-chariot-hero Aśvatthāman,

43 With the swiftness of an expert,
shattered the sword and shield
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
before he could leap off
the chariot.
An incredible feat!

44 Unchorioted, horses killed,
bow splintered, arrow-pierced –
wounded
all over his body –
such was the plight
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna –

45 Yet, however hard he tried,
O finest of Bharatas,
the mahā-chariot-hero Aśvatthāman
could not kill him.
O rājā! Failing to kill with arrows,
Aśvatthāman

46 Laid aside his bow and ran
towards Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
O rājā!
As he jumped down
from his chariot,
the speed of that mahā-ātmaned hero

47 Was like that of Garuḍa swooping down
to strike a *pannaga*-serpent.
Exactly then,
Madhava-Krishna said to Arjuna:

48 "Pārtha-Arjuna!
See how swiftly
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
is running towards
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
He's determined to kill him.
And he will –
there's no doubt of it.

49 O mahā-muscled one!
O foe-exterminator!
Rescue Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
from the mouth of Droṇa's son,
from the jaws of death."

50 Saying this, O mahārāja,
Vāsudeva-Krishna urged
the horses forward
to the site
of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman,

51 They seemed to be gulping the sky,
those horses
shining like the moon,
as, under the prompting
of Keśava-Krishna,
they sped towards Aśvatthāman.

52 O rājā!
Seeing the mahā-valiant pair
Krishna and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
advancing towards him,
mahā-powerful Aśvatthāman.
redoubled his efforts
to kill Dhṛṣṭadyumna quickly.

53 O lord of men!
Seeing Dhṛṣṭadyumna dragged out,
mahā-powerful Pārtha-Arjuna
targeted a volley of arrows
at Droṇa's son.

54 Like snakes burrowing
into an ant hill,
those gold-feathered arrows
shot from the Gāṇḍīva,
pierced the body
of Aśvatthāman.

55 O rājā!
Dazed by those fearful arrows,
the valiant son of Droṇa,
Aśvatthāman,
released the infinitely energetic
prince of Pāñcāla.

56 Wounded by the arrows
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
he climbed into his chariot,
from where
he started shooting arrows
at Pārtha-Arjuna

57 O lord of people!
In the meantime,
Sahadeva spirited
foe-scorching Dhṛṣṭadyumna
away to safety
in his chariot.

58 Mahārāja! Arjuna retaliated
by targeting
the son of Droṇa
with his arrows,
and Aśvatthāman targeted
Arjuna's chest and arms.

59 Furious Pārtha-Arjuna replied
with a volley
of *nārāca*-arrows that sped
towards Droṇa's son
like the punishing rod of Kāla,
god of death.

60 Mahārāja! The mahā-radiant arrows
struck
the Brahmin's shoulder.
The impact
stupefied him into a state
of semi-consciousness.

61 He slumped down dazed
in his chariot.
Mahāraja!
Then Karṇa
lifted his victory-bow
called the Vijaya,

62 And flaming with anger
he kept looking
at Arjuna repeatedly,
as if challenging
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
to a chariot-duel.

63 Seeing Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
lying unconscious
in the chariot,
his charioteer
swiftly drove him away
from the battleground.

64 Mahārāja! Seeing Pṛṣata's son
Dhṛṣṭadyumna. safe
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
in danger,
the Pāñcālas shouted cries
of victorious jubilation.

65 And thousands of musical instruments
added
to the clamour.
Wonderful the feats of war –
lion-roars
the shouts of the heroes.

66 Having displayed such valour
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:
"Krishna! My next major target
are the Saṁśaptakas.
Drive my chariot
to where they are."

67 Dāśārha-Krishna heard
the request
of Pāṇḍava Arjuna
and sped forward
the wind-and-mind-swift
high-flag-flying chariot.

SECTION SIXTY

1 Before the darshan of Dharmarāja
Yudhiṣṭhira (Sañjaya continued)
Kuntī's son Arjuna
was told by Krishna:

2 "Son of Pāṇḍu, your brother
Yudhiṣṭhira's death
is sought by the mahā-ātmaned
mahā-bowmen sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

3 The mahā-powerful,
difficult-to-defeat Pāñcālas
are trying their best to rescue
mahā-ātmaned Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 And the rājā of all the world
Duryodhana,
clad in coat of mail,
leading a host of chariots,
is pursuing
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 O tiger-among-men!
With the help
of his brothers –
whose touch is like the sting
of venomous snakes,
who are well-versed in war-weapons –
with their help
he wants to kill Yudhiṣṭhira

6 Like beggars running after
a rich benefator,
the elephants, horses, chariots
and foot-soldiers
of Duryodhana's army
are pursuing Yudhiṣṭhira.

7 Like Śakra-Indra and Agni
preventing the Daitya anti-gods
from stealing
the *amṛta*-nectar
of immortality,
the Sātvata Sātyaki and Bhīma
are immobilising
the army of Duryodhana.

8 Their countless mahā-chariot-heroes
are sweeping on Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
like rain-swollen rivers
spilling in the ocean in the monsoon.

9 Blowing their conches,
brandishing their bows,
lion-roaring their war-cries,
are their powerful mahā-bowmen.

10 I think, attacked by Duryodhana,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
is very near the jaws of Death,
he is like an oblation
cast in the sacred fire.

11 Pāṇḍava Arjuna!
It seems even Śakra-Indra will not be able
to survive the arrows of Duryodhna.

12 For Duryodhana
is like Antaka-Death himself –
who can escape the speed of his shafts
on the battlefield?

13 The impact of the arrows
of heroic Duryodhana,
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
of Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,
and of Karṇa,
can shatter mountains.

14 Karṇa even succeeded
in forcing Yudhiṣṭhira
to flee the battlefield –
though rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
is a scorcher of enemies,
dexterous and powerful
and well-versed-in-warfare.

15 Reinforced by the mahā-powerful
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Rādhā's son Karṇa will experience
no difficulty in routing
finest-of-Pāṇḍavas Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 On the battlefield,
the mahā-chariot-hero sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and others
pinned down
ātman-disciplined Yudhiṣṭhira
and sliced his armour.

17 The most-excellent-Bharata
Yudhiṣṭhira is weak
with excessive fasting.
Brahmin-power he has,
but not much
of Kṣatriya-prowess.

18 Battling with Karṇa,
scorcher-of-enemies
lord-of-the-earth
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
has placed himself
in grave danger.

19 Pārtha-Arjuna!
It seems to me
Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira is no more alive.
The lion-roars endured by revengeful Bhīma,

20 Foe-crushing Bhīma –
The repeated lion-roars
and victory-cries
and blaring conches
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons –
is proof of this.

21 O finest of the Bharatas!
O bull-brave hero!
Karṇa is rousing
the mahā-powerful sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's to unite –
and kill Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

22 Pārtha-Arjuna!
The Kaurava mahā-chariot-heroes
are targeting
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
with clusters of missiles:
the Sthūṇakarṇa,
the Indrajāla,
and the Pāśupata.

23 O Bharata descendant!
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira is devastated.
He needs help.
The Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas
are proceeding
to defend him.

24 Timely-and-swiftly-reacting
weapons-expert valiant Yudhiṣṭhira
is drowning in the Pātāla underworld:
he badly needs help.

25 Pārtha-Arjuna!
The rājā's war-flag
is not visible.
Karṇa's arrows
have shredded it
before the very eyes
of the twins
Nakula and Sahadeva,
Sātyaki, Śikhaṇḍin,

26 Dhṛṣṭadyumna Bhīma, Śatānīka,
and, O lordly Bharata-descendant,
all the Pāñcālas and the Cedīs.

27 Pārtha-Arjuna!
Like an elephant trampling
lotuses in a lake,
Karṇa with his arrows
is decimating
the Pāṇḍava ranks.

28 Son of Pāṇḍu!
The charioteers of your army
are fleeing.
See! Pārtha-Arjuna! See!
The mahā-chariot-heroes
are all fleeing!

29 O Bharata descendant!
Assailed by the arrows
Of Karṇa,
the trumpeting elephants
are scattering
in all directions.

30 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Attacked by slayer-
of-enemies Karṇa,
the chariot-divisions
are dispersing
all over the field.

31 O foremost of flag-
bearing chariot-heroes!
See the elephant-rope-
symbolled war-flag
of the charioteer's son Karṇa
dominating the war-field!

32 See Rādhā's son Karṇa
deluging your warriors
with thousands of arrows,
and assailing
the chariot
of Bhīma!

33 See the Pāñcāla
mahā-chariot-heroes
routed by him
like the Daitya anti-gods
routed by Śakra-Indra
in the mahā-battle!

34 And now that Karṇa
has crushed the Pāñcālas,
Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas,
he is looking around,
I think,
to target you.

35 Pārtha-Arjuna!
How handsome Karṇa looks,
pulling his bowstring taut,
among the Kauravas,
like Śakra-Indra
in the assembly of gods.

36 The Kauravas witness
the valour of Karṇa,
and they shout
and instil terror
among the Pāṇḍavas
and Sṛñjayas.

37 O honour-bestowing hero!
In that mahā-battle,
Rādhā's son Karṇa vandalises
the Pāṇḍavas,
and proclaims to the warriors
of his army:

38 'May all go well with you,
O Kauravas!
Fight in such a way today
that no Sṛñjaya
leaves
the field alive.

39 Take heart. Remember:
we are behind you.'
With these words
Karṇa continues
to advance from the rear,
shooting showers of arrows.

40 Look at him, Pārtha-Arjuna!
Look at Karṇa
with his pure-white umbrella,
as radiant
as the full moon rising
on the Udaya hills.

41 O Bharata descendant!
There he is,
under the massive white
hundred-ribbed umbrella
that shines
like the full moon –

42 O lord of the earth!
There he is,
glancing sharply
in your direction.
In no time
will he be facing you.

43 O mahā-muscled hero!
See how he brandishes
his mahā-bow
on the battlefield,
shooting volley upon volley
of venomous arrows.

44 Rādhā's son Karṇa
has spotted
your *vānara*-emblemed war-flag,
O foe-chastiser,
and is rushing here
to battle with you.

45 O Bharata descendant!
Seeking his death,
he rushes at you like an insect
into a flame.
Seeing him, alone,
Duryodhana's chariots follow him,

46 To reinforce his display
of singlehanded valour.
Try your hardest today
to finish off
wicked-ātmaned Karṇa
and his followers,

47 If you value your fame,
your kingdom
and your happiness.
When the two of you
battle
with brilliant valour and energy,

48 As the gods battled
with the Danavas
in the god-antigod war,
then, O Pārtha-Arjuna,
the Kauravas will taste
the prowess of Pārtha.

49 O bull-brave Bharata!
With you and Karṇa
both livid with anger,
even angry Duryodhana
is helpless –
he will not be able to interfere.

50 O bull-brave Bharata!
The time has come.
Do what must be done.
Keep you ātman in control.
Treat Rādhā's son Karṇa
as the enemy
of dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
Kuntī's son, now's your chance.

51 Make up your mind to fight.
Attack chariot-commander Karṇa.
O excellent chariot-hero!
Magnificent, five

52 Hundred charioteers,
brave and energetic,
are advancing on the field;
five thousand elephants,
ten thousand horses
are advancing also;

53 Supporting them,
Kuntī's son,
are ten hundred thousand foot-soldiers.
O valiant one!
Each force buttressing
the other,

54 Under the command
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
will target you.
You must decide
to quickly
destroy them.

55 After destroying the chariots,
confront world-famed
mahā-bowman Karṇa.
Reveal yourself, bull-brave Bharata!
Use all your brilliant prowess
and energy,

56 And attack! Infuriated Karṇa
is targeting the Pāñcālas.
I can see
his war-flag
fluttering near the chariot
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

57 O foe-tormentor! I know
he will attack the Pāñcālas.
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
bull-brave Bharata,
I have some good news
for you –

58 Dharma's son
Śrīmān rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
is alive and safe.
Mahā-muscled Bhīma
is back and is again
leading the army.

59 With him, O bull-brave Bharata,
are the Sṛñjayas
and Śini's grandson Sātyaki.
The Kauravas
are being killed with arrows
on the field,

60 O Kuntī's son, by Bhīma
and the mahā-ātmaned Pāñcālas.
The warriors
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's army,
bloodied in battle,
are fleeing;

61 Blood streams from the wounds
on their bodies.
Bathed in blood,
like a barren field
bereft of crops
is the appearance

62 Of the army
of the Bharatas,
O Bharata-descendant –
a pitiful sight!
Look, son of Kuntī,
the army leader Bhīma,

63 Like a provoked snake,
is lashing out
at the Kaurava warriors.
The yellow-bloodred-
black-white-star-moon-
studded-and-embroidered

64 War-flags and innumerable umbrellas
litter the battlefield,
O Arjuna.
Gold and silver
and brass
and other metal-made

65 Flagpoles of war-flags
lie shredded
on the battlefield.
Horses and elephants too.
Chariot-heroes are toppling
from their chariots,

66 Slain by the arrows
of never-retreating-in-battle
Pāñcāla warriors.
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Rider-less elephants,
horses and chariots

67 Are the targets
of the tigers-among-men Pāñcālas
who are supported
by Bhīma.
The soldiers of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's army
are being decimated.

68 O foe-tormentor!
Giving up the desire to live,
difficult-to-defeat Pāñcāla soldiers
are crushing their foes,
and shouting
and blowing conches.

69 Look at the magnificent prowess
of the Pāñcālas! –
running freely
all over the battlefield,
assailing and killing
with their arrows

70 The warriors of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
like an enraged lion
mauling a herd of elephants.
Losing their own weapons,
they snatch the weapons
of their enemies,

71 And continue killing and shouting,
never failing
to hit their targets.
They slice
the heads and arms
of their enemies,

72 And shatter the chariots
and horses
of illustrious heroes.
Duryodhana's mahā-army
is assailed by the Pāñcālas
from all sides

73 Like swift-speeding *haṁsa*-swans
from the Mānasa lake
flying towards the Gaṅgā.
What incredible efforts
to check the Pāñcālas
are made

74 By Kṛpa and Karṇa
and other heroes,
like bulls battering bulls!
Devastated
by Bhīma's weapons,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-chariot-heroes

75 And thousands of others
are being massacred
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Seeing the Pāñcālas
about to be defeated
by their enemies,

76 Māruti-Bhīma showers arrows
on the enemies
and roars like a lion.
Fear paralyses
the major part of the army
of Duryodhana.

77 Panic-stricken charioteers
and their horses
flee helter-skelter in fear.
Struck by Bhīma's *nārāca*-arrows,
see the huge elephants
collapsing,

78 Toppling like mountain peaks
sundered
by Vajri-Indra's thunderbolt.
Driven wild
by the curved and knotted arrows
of Bhīma,

79 The mahā-elephants
go on a rampage,
trampling
their own warriors.

80 Devastated by Bhīma,
the Kauravas have abandoned
thousands of elephants, chariots and horses,
and fled in panic.

81 The fleeing elephants, horses,
chariots and foot-soldiers hear
the roars of Bhīma
decimating the Kaurava army.

82 Arjuna, hear the victory-flushed roars
of valiant Bhīma!
A son of a Niṣāda, riding an elephant,
is attacking the Pāṇḍava

83 In a fit a anger, lunging at him
with a *tomara*-lance
like Antaka-Death
wielding his rod.
See! Bhīma has sliced
both arms
of the roaring, *tomara*-wielding
son of a Niṣāda

84 And killed him
with two sharp *nārāca*-arrows
dazzling like fire, like the sun.
After slaying him,
he has recommenced attacking
the elephants.

85 See, like a mass of black clouds,
with *śakti*-spear and *tomara*-lance
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
is massacring the elephants.

86 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Your elder brother Bhīma,
with his sharp arrows,
has shredded Vaijayanti war-flags
and felled
forty-nine elephants.

87 Each elephant he killed
with ten *nārāca*-arrows.
The victory-shouts of the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra are silent,

88 O bull-brave Bharata,
with the return
of infuriated Bhīma,
whose prowess
is like that of city-destroying
Purandara-Indra.

89 The fury of Bhīma has succeeded
in blocking the advance
of three *akṣauhiṇīs*
of the army of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

90 Like men with weak eyes
unable to look
at the glare of the midday sun,
the earth-lords
on the battlefield dare not look
at Pārtha-Bhīma.

91 Like a flock of deer
terrorised by a lion,
the warriors
of the Kauravas
were savaged by Bhīma.
No happiness for them!

92 The infuriated Pāṇḍavas
are harassing
mahā-muscled Duryodhana.
The energetic son of Rādhā, Karṇa,
with his bow,
has gone,

93 With countless warriors,
to protect Duryodhana,
after leaving off
attacking Bhīma.
The very powerful hero Karṇa
is now near Duryodhana."

94 Having heard Vāsudeva-Krishna
(continued Sañjaya)
and witnessed
the incredibly difficult feats of Bhīma,
mahā-muscled
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

95 Routed the rest
of his enemies
with volleys of sharp arrows.
Prabhu! Lord!
Decimated in battle,
the Saṁśaptakas,

96 Though mahā-powerful,
scattered in all directions
on the battlefield.
Others obtained relief
by becoming permanent guests
of Śakra-Indra's heaven.

97 Tiger-among-men Pārtha-Arjuna,
shooting volleys
of curved and knotted arrows,
slaughtered the chariots,
elephants, horses and foot-soldiers
of Duryodhana's army.

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:
"Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and Bhīma returned,
the Pāṇḍava and Sṛñjaya warriors
routed my army,

2 My warriors lost heart
and were in disarray –
tell me, Sañjaya,
what did the Kauravas do then?"

3 That mahā-massacre, O rājā,
was the result
of your ill advice (said Sañjaya).
Seeing mahā-muscled Bhīma,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
angrily attacked him.

4 O rājā! Seeing your warriors
terrified by Bhīma's
fierce onslaught,
powerful Karṇa
tried his best to restore
their morale.

5 Mahā-muscled Karṇa succeeded
in re-grouping
the warriors of your army
led by your son Duryodhana,
and advanced towards
the brilliant-in-battle Pāṇḍavas.

6 Brandishing their bows
and shooting volleys of arrows,
the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes
prepared to repulse the offensive
of Rādhā's son Karṇa.

7 Bhīmasena, Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
Śikhaṇḍin, Janamejaya,
powerful Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
all the Prabhadrakas –

8 All these tigers-among-men,
roused to wrath,
eager for victory
on the battlefield,
determined to kill
your warriors,
pounced on your ranks
from all sides.

9 O rājā! In the same way,
your valiant
mahā-chariot-heroes,
eager to wipe out
the Pāṇḍava warriors,
pounced upon them.

10 O tiger-among-men!
A wonderful spectacle!
Chariots, elephants,
horses, foot-soldiers,
flags fluttering,
marching for mutual massacre.

11 Mahārāja! Śikhaṇḍin chose Karṇa
to attack,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna with a massive force
of warriors
decided to target
your son Duḥśāsana.

12 O rājā! Nakula attacked
Vṛṣasena,
Yudhiṣṭhira attacked
Citrasena,
and Sahadeva attacked
Ulūka.

13 Sātyaki attacked Śakuni,
the sons of Draupadī
attacked other Kauravas,
and Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
attacked
always-alert Arjuna.

14 Gautama-Kṛpa chose
to attack
the mahā-bowman Yudhāmanyu,
and the extremely powerful
Kṛtavarman
targeted Uttamaujas.

15 O respectworthy monarch!
Mahā-muscled Bhīma,
single handed,
took on the Kaurava army,
and blocked the advance
of your sons.

16 Mahārāja! Slayer-of-Bhīṣma
heroic Śikhaṇḍin
with volleys of feathered arrows
attacked Karṇa
who was fearlessly dominating
the battlefield.

17 Obstructed by Śikhaṇḍin,
Karṇa bit his lips in anger.
With three arrows
he grazed
and injured Śikhaṇḍin
between his two eyebrows.

18 How magnificent he looked –
Śikhaṇḍin,
with three arrows embedded
in his forehead,
like a silvery mountain
with three peaks.

19 Assailed on the battlefield
by the son of a charioteer
Karṇa,
Śikhaṇḍin retaliated
by wounding him
with ninety sharp arrows.

20 Mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa
with three arrows
killed Śikhaṇḍin charioteer
and horses,
and shredded his war-flag
with a razor-arrow.

21 Jumping out
of his horseless chariot,
the infuriated tormentor-
of-his-enemies
mahā-chariot-hero
Śikhaṇḍin flung
a *śakti*-spear
at Karṇa.

22 O descendant of Bharata!
Karṇa sliced it with three arrows,
and with nine more
wounded Śikhaṇḍin.

23 Already grievously wounded,
finest-of-men Śikhaṇḍin,
seeking to escape
from the arrows of Karṇa,
quickly left
the battlefield.

24 Mahārāja! It was then
that mahā-powerful Karṇa
swooped on the Pāṇḍavas
like a gust of wind
blowing away
fluffs of cotton.

25 Mahārāja!
Harassed by your son Duḥśāsana,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
grievously wounded him
in the chest
with three arrows.

26 Rushing at Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
your son Duḥśāsana
shot seventeen
gold-feathered arrows
at his chest
and both arms.

27 O respectworthy monarch!
Duḥśāsana wounded
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's left arm.
Injured by three
gold-feathered, curved
and knotted *bhalla*-arrows,

28 Dhṛṣṭadyumna was roused
into furious rage
and, O Bharata descendant,
he replied
with a formidable shaft
aimed at Duḥśāsana.

29 O lord of the earth!
With three arrows
your son Duḥśāsana
splintered the arrow
that was speeding
towards him.

30 O respectworthy monarch!
Livid with anger,
Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
sliced Duḥśāsana's bow
with a sharp arrow.
Loud shouts everywhere!

31 But your son Duḥśāsana
merely smiled and,
readying another bow,
he released volley upon volley
of arrows
at Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

32 Witnessing the prowess
of your supremely
mahā-ātmaned son Duḥśāsana,
the warriors on the field,
and the Siddhas and apsarās
in the sky marvelled.

33 All of us witnessed how
mahā-powerful Dhṛṣṭadyumna
was stopped in his tracks
by Duḥśāsana,
like a lion obstructing
a mahā-elephant.

34 O elder brother of Pāṇḍu!
In a move to rescue
their general Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the Pāñcāla chariots,
elephants and horses
surrounded your son.

35 O destroyer of enemies!
What erupted
between your warriors
and their enemies
was a truly
terrifying encounter.

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36 Standing by the side
of his father,
Vṛṣasena wounded Nakula
with five iron arrows,
and assailed him
with three more.

37 Heroic Nakula smiled
and retaliated
with a super-sharp
nārāca-arrow
that pierced
Vṛṣasena's chest.

38 O tormentor of foes!
Though wounded seriously
by his powerful enemy,
Vṛṣasena blocked Nakula
with twenty, and wounded him
with five more arrows.

39 Both those tigers-among-men
shrouded each other
with thousands of arrows.
There was consternation and panic
in the ranks
of the Kauravas.

40 O lord of the earth!
The charioteer's son Karṇa
saw the warriors
of Duryodhana's ranks fleeing,
and quickly
re-grouped them.

41 As soon as Karṇa left,
Nakula recommenced
harassing the Kauravas.
Avoiding an encounter
with Nakula,
Karṇa's son swiftly proceeded,

42 O respectworthy monarch,
to protect the wheels
of his father's chariot.
O respectworthy monarch!
Sahadeva was successful
in blocking enraged Ulūka.

43 Valiant Sahadeva
killed all the four horses
of Ulūka's chariot,
and despatched the charioteer
to the abode of Yama,
god of death.

44 O lord of the earth!
Delighter-of-his-father
Ulūka jumped
from his chariot
and ran to the ranks
of the Trigartas.

45 Pinning him down
with twenty sharp arrows,
Sātyaki smiled as he attacked
Subala's son Śakuri,
shredding his war-flag
with a single *bhalla*-arrow.

46 O rājā! The valiant son
of Subala,
livid with anger,
sliced Sātyaki's armour,
and shredded
his golden war-flag.

47 Mahārāja! Sātyaki replied
with sharp arrows
that injured him,
and disabled
the charioteer of Śakuni
with three arrows,

48 And with another volley
of arrows he sent
the chariot-horses of Śakuni,
to the abode of Yama.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Swiftly Śakuni

49 Leapt from his chariot
and climbed into the chariot
of mahā-ātmaned Ulūka,
who quickly drove
a far distance away
from brilliant-in-battle Sātyaki.

50 O rājā! Then Sātyaki launched
a fierce offensive
against the warriors
of your son's army,
forcing them to retreat
in utter confusion.

51 O lord of the earth!
Terrorised by the swarms
of arrows discharged
by Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
your dispirited warriors
fled in all directions.

52 Your son Duryodhana
confronted Bhīma on the field.
In no time at all,
Bhīma destroyed
the horses, charioteer,
chariot and war-flag

53 Of lord-of-the-earth
Lokeśvara-Duryodhana –
to the delight of everyone
present on the field.
Duryodhana fled from Bhīma.

54 Then the entire Kaurava army
attacked Bhīma.
A mahā-deafening din
rose from the ranks
of the Kaurava warriors
eager to kill Bhīma.

55 Yudhāmanyu sliced the bow
of Kṛpa,
but weapons-expert Kṛpa
quickly readied another bow

56 And destroyed Yudhāmanyu's
war-flag
charioteer
and umbrella.
The mahā-chariot-hero
Yudhāmanyu
fled
the battlefield.

57 Like a torrential downpour
obscuring
a mountain,
Uttamaujas overpowered
the fiercely valiant son of Hṛdika,
Kṛtavarman.

58 O exterminator of enemies!
O lord of the earth!
A horrible, truly horrible clash
it was –
the like of which
I had never witnessed.

59 O rājā! In that clash
Kṛtavarman wounded Uttamaujas
so grievously
in the chest
that he slumped unconscious
in his chariot.

60 But his charioteer swiftly
sped him away
while the other warriors watched.
Then, in a flash,
the Kaurava army surrounded Bhīma
from all sides.

61 With a massive force
of elephants
Duḥśāsana and Subala's son Śakuni
encircled Pāṇḍava Bhīma
and assailed him
with arrows.

62 But Bhīma forced Duryodhana
to retreat
with hundreds of arrows,
and concentrated his attack
on the ranks
of the elephants.

63 Seeing the enemy elephants
relentlessly advancing,
infuriated
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
took the help
of divine weapons.

64 Like Indra with his thunderbolt
slaughtering the hosts
of antigods, Bhīma killed
elephants with elephants.
Then, with his arrows
he shrouded the sky,
like *śalabha*-ants a tree; –

65 This wolf-waisted Bhīma did
after killing the elephants.
He scattered and slaughtered
thousands of elephants

66 Like a storm scattering
and shredding clouds.
Decorated with gold filigree,
and gem-studded,

67 The elephants dazzled
like lightning-charged clouds.
O rājā! Assailed by Bhīma,
the elephants fled.

68 Their hearts ripped and bleeding,
some toppled and fell.
They staggered and fell,
all those gold-decorated elephants,

69 Like heap upon heap
of shattered mountain peaks.
And with all those glittering,
gem-adorned elephant-riders,

70 The battlefield was a spectacle
of enchantment,
like a multitude of stars
shorn of the radiance
of their holy merits.
Their temples,
their foreheads,
their bodies mangled

71 By Bhīma's arrow-volleys,
the elephants fled,
hundreds of them.
Hill-huge elephants,
terror-traumatised,
vomiting blood,

72 Fled. They looked like lovely hills,
glittering with minerals.
Two mahā-arms,
smeared with sandalwood and *aguru*-paste,

73 Of Bhīma,
pulling his bow ear-tant,
could be clearly seen,
like two snakes.
Like lightning crashing
was the twang of his bow –

74 Which made the terrified elephants
pass piss and dung.
O rājā!
What a feat it was –
intelligent Bhīma
fighting singlehanded,
like Rudra-Śiva destroying
the world's creatures.

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
In that incomparable
white-horsed chariot,
driven by Nārāyaṇa-Krishna himself,
Śrīmān Arjuna arrived
on the battlefield.

2 O excellent king! Like a storm
buffeting an ocean,
Vijaya-Arjuna created havoc
in your horse-abounding army.

3 Taking advantage
of a slight lack of caution
by white-vehicled Arjuna,
your son,
enraged Duryodhana, suddenly
with half his army

4 Succeeded in encircling
the ranks
of impatient Yudhiṣṭhira,
and wounded him
with seventy-three
razor arrows.

5 This so infuriated Kuntī's son
Yudhiṣṭhira
that he assailed your son
with thirty *bhalla*-arrows.

6 The Kauravas tried to capture Yudhiṣṭhira.
Sensing the cunning plan,
the mahā-chariot-heroes of the Pāṇḍavas

7 Rushed to the defence
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
Nakula, Sahadeva,
and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

8 With an *akṣauhiṇī* of soldiers
advanced towards Yudhiṣṭhira.
Finishing off
the mahā-chariot-heroes
of your army,
Bhīma also

9 Rushed to the defence
of enemy-encircled Yudhiṣṭhira.
O king!
With a shower of arrows,
Vaikartana-Karṇa
swiftly blocked

10 The advance
of all those mahā-bowmen.
They retaliated
with volleys of arrows
and *tomara*-javelins
fired at will,

11 But they were unable
to focus
on Rādhā's son Karṇa
All-weapons-expert,
he faced
all those mahā-bowmen;

12 Rādhā's son Karṇa
stopped all of them
with a shower of arrows.
Duryodhana was the one
attacked next, with twenty shafts,
with a variety of weapons

13 By illustrious
and valiant Sahadeva,
and held in check.
Struck by Sahadeva's arrows,
Duryodhana looked like
a multi-peaked mountain,

14 Like a wounded
musth elephant
streaming with blood.
Seeing your son
pierced grievously
by those sharp arrows,

15 Finest-of-chariot-heroes
Rādhā's son Karṇa
was livid with anger.
Seeing Duryodhana in peril,
he swiftly
readied his weapons,

16 And attacked the ranks
of Yudhiṣṭhira
and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Yudhiṣṭhira's soldiers,
demoralised by the intensity
of the mahā-ātmaned

17 Son-of-a-charioteer
Karṇa's arrow volleys,
fled. One after another
they fell, those arrows,
they fell, O rājā,
one upon the other,

18 Like fruits falling
upon fallen feathers,
shot by the charioteer's son
Karṇa.
Crashing into each other
in the sky,

19 Mahārāja, some exploded,
turning the sky
into a mass of flame.
Karṇa's arrows
sped in all ten directions,
burrowing like *śalabha*-worms,

20 O rājā, through the bodies
of his enemies,
swiftly and precisely.
Red-sandalwood-smeared,
gem-and-gold–
glittering –

21 The two arms of Karṇa,
brandishing wondrous weapons –
how splendid they looked!
O rājā!
All the directions
were a chaos of arrows.

22 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was incessantly assailed
by Karṇa.
Mahārāja!
In a burst of anger,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

23 Released a volley
of fifty sharp arrows
at Karṇa.
A horrendous sight!
Pitch-dark with arrows,
the whole battlefield!

24 O lord of the world!
O respectworthy monarch!
When Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
began his attack,
your soldiers broke
into screams of "Hai! Hai!"

25 *Kaṅka*-feathered arrows
exceedingly sharp shafts
various *bhalla*-arrows
śakti-spears
ṛṣti-swords
musala-clubs –

26 Wherever Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
employed these weapons
in his blame-deserving
fury of anger,
your warriors fled,
O bull-brave Bharata.

27 Karṇa was no less
livid with anger
than Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
With *nārāca*-arrows,
half-moon arrows,
calf-toothed arrows,

28 His lips throbbing
with revengeful anger,
indomitably energetic
heroic Karṇa
attacked Yudhiṣṭhira
on the battlefield.

29 Yudhiṣṭhira replied
with sharp, gold-feathered arrows;
but Karṇa
merely smiled,
and with sharp,
kaṅka-feathered

30 *Bhalla*-arrows – three of them –
he pierced the chest
of Pāṇḍu's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Assailed in this manner,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

31 Slumped in his chariot,
and ordered his charioteer:
"Drive me away from here!"
It was then
that rājā Duryodhana
and all your sons started shouting:

32 "Seize him!"
In a body they rushed
towards rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
One thousand seven hundred
Kekaya warriors,
together

33 With a contingent
of Pāñcāla soldiers,
blocked their advance.
Even as that confused,
man-murdering battle
went on,

34 Mahā-powerful Duryodhana
and Bhīma fought face to face.

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 Sañjaya continued:
With network-volleys of arrows
Karṇa attacked
the brilliant-in-bowcraft
mahā-chariot-hero Kekayas.

2 Rādhā's son Karṇa despatched
to the abode of Yama
five hundred chariot-heroes
intent on blocking him.

3 Devastated by the valour
of Rādheya-Karṇa,
unable to face his arrows,
the Pāṇḍava warriors
retreated to the safety
of Bhīma.

4 Dispersing all those Pāṇḍava
chariot-heroes
with his arrows,
Karṇa, alone in his chariot,
concentrated next
on Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 At that time, brave Yudhiṣṭhira,
semi-conscious,
protected by Nakula and Sahadeva
on both sides,
was slowly proceeding
to the safety of his camp.

6 Driving alongside the chariot
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and eager to help Duryodhana,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
wounded Yudhiṣṭhira again
with three arrows.

7 Yudhiṣṭhira retaliated by wounding
Rādheya-Karṇa
in the chest, and with three arrows
targeting his charioteer,
and with four more
injuring his horses.

8 Protectors of both wheels
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the foe-destroying twin sons of Mādrī,
fearing Karṇa
would kill Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
rushed to defend him.

9 In an excellently planned manoeuvre,
Nakula and Sahadeva
repeatedly
showered volleys
of arrows
on Rādheya-Karṇa.

10 But illustrious Karṇa,
son of a charioteer,
with two super-sharp *bhalla*-arrows,
wounded
the foe-crushing
mahā-ātmaned twins.

11 Rādhā's son Karṇa
killed Yudhiṣṭhira's horses –
white-skinned, tail-and-neck-
black-haired horses,
horses that galloped as swift
as the wind.

12 The mahā-bowman
son of a charioteer smiled
and, with a *bhalla*-arrow,
knocked the crown down
from the head
of Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 Next, valiant Karṇa killed
the horses
of intelligent Nakula,
splintered his bow,
and shattered the *īṣā*-shafts
of his chariot.

14 Their horses and chariots destroyed,
the two Pāṇḍavas
Nakula and Yudhiṣṭhira
quickly climbed
into the chariot
of Sahadeva.

15 Seeing them unchorioted,
their maternal uncle,
the enemy-hero-exterminating
rājā of Madra, Śalya,
feeling sorry for them,
said to Rādheya-Karṇa:

16 "Are you not supposed
to fight today
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Phālguna-Arjuna?
Have you lost your head?
Why are you targeting
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira?

17 Your weapons are smashed,
armour ripped apart,
arrows and quiver splintered,
horses and charioteer exhausted,
you are wounded
by enemy-arrows –

18 O Rādheya-Karṇa!
When you face Pārtha-Arjuna,
he will laugh at you!"
Despite these words of the Madra-rājā
on the battlefield,
Karṇa

19 Was so possessed by anger
that he continued
to pursue Yudhiṣṭhira.
Wounding Mādrī's twin sons
by Pāṇḍu
with sharp arrows,

20 Karṇa smiled,
and forced Yudhiṣṭhira
to turn his face away
from the battlefield.
Śalya smiled
and said again to Karṇa

21 Who had determined
to kill Yudhiṣṭhira
from the advantage of his chariot:
"The person to fight whom
you were elevated
by Duryodhana –

22 Kill him! Kill Pārtha-Arjuna!
O Rādheya-Karṇa,
what will you gain
by killing Yudhiṣṭhira?

23 If you kill Yudhiṣṭhira,
Pārtha-Arjuna
will surely kill
our chariot-heroes.
But if you kill Arjuna,
you can be sure
that victory
will be Duryodhana's.

24 O mahā-muscled one!
Look,
there is the sun-dazzling war-flag
of Arjuna!
Kill him!
Forget Yudhiṣṭhira.

25 Listen!
The mahā-thunderous sound
of the war-conches
of Krishna and Arjuna!

26 The twang
of the bowstring
like the roaring
of rain-clouds!
Arjuna
with his deluge of arrows
is massacring
our chariot-heroes –

27 See, Karṇa!
He seems to be devouring
our entire army!
His rear is protected
by Yudhāmanyu
and Uttamaujas;

28 Sātyaki is protecting
the left flank
of heroic Arjuna,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
is protecting
the right wheel.

29 Bhīma is locked in battle
with rājā Duryodhana,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's eldest son.
See to it
that on no account
is Bhīma able to kill

30 Rājā Duryodhana.
O Rādheya-Karṇa!
You must save him.
Look! Glorious-in-battle Duryodhana
is trapped
by Bhīma!

31 Wonderful
if you can save him
now!
Rush to him,
and rescue him.
He's in grave danger.

32 What good is it killing
Nakula and Sahadeva
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira?"
O lord of the earth!
Listening to Śalya's advice,
Rādhā's son Karṇa.

33 Seeing Duryodhana imperilled
by Bhīma
in that mahā-battle,
seeking Duryodhana's welfare,
and inspired
by Śalya's words,

34 Spared foe-less
Ajātaśatru Yudhiṣṭhira
and Mādrī's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,
and rushed to the rescue
of your son Duryodhana.

35 The Madra-rājā Śalya's horses
seemed to be flying
in the sky.
Karṇa left,
and Pāṇḍu's son by Kuntī,
Yudhiṣṭhira,

36 With Sahadeva,
O respectworthy monarch,
fled the battlefield.
Protected by Nakula and Sahadeva,
lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
shamefully

37 Retreated to the safety
of his camp.
Alighting from the chariot,
he lay down on a beautiful bed.
His body was mutilated
with arrow-wounds.

38 They plucked the arrows
from his body,
but humiliation lacerated his heart
his heart. Sadly,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
said to the mahā-chariot-hero sons of Mādrī:

39 "O heroic twins!
Brave sons of Pāṇḍu!
Go immediately back
to where Bhīma is roaring,
the wolf-waisted hero,
like a thunder-cloud,
and challenging
his enemies."

40 Climbing into another chariot,
the bull-brave chariot-hero
Nakula
and radiantly energetic Sahadeva,
twin crushers
of their enemies,

41 Drove swiftly to reinforce Bhīma.
The valiant twins
stood alongside Bhīma
in battling the enemy.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Suddenly, Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
surrounded
by a massive force of chariots,
appeared
where Pārtha-Arjuna was.

2 Like the shores keeping in check
the ocean teeming
with *makara*-whales,
Pārtha-Arjuna and Śauri-Krishna
blocked
the chariot-offensive.

3 Mahārāja! Droṇa's valiant son Aśvatthāman
shrouded
Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Krishna
with a shower of arrows.

4 The Kaurava mahā-chariot-heroes
saw the two Krishnas
deluged with arrows,
and they marvelled,
and they kept staring
at Arjuna and Krishna.

5 O Bharata descendant!
Suddenly, Arjuna, smiling,
materialised a divine weapon,
but the Brahmin Aśvatthāman
neutralised it
on the battlefield.

6 Every weapon used
by Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
against him,
was baffled by a counter-weapon
by Droṇa's mahā-bowman son
Aśvatthāman.

7 O rājā!
In that mahā-fearful battle
that raged,
we saw Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
like Antaka-Yama himself
with wide-open jaws.

8 He deluged the directions
and sub-directions
with sleek straight arrows,
and with three arrows
he targeted the right arm
of Vāsudeva-Krishna.

9 But Arjuna slaughtered
all the horses
of that mahā-ātmaned hero,
and made a gory
river of blood flow
on the battlefield.

10 A river of blood!
Flowing to the other world!
Carrying with it
The creatures of his world!
All present there saw
Charioteers and chariot-heroes,
Killed by the arrows
Of Pārtha-Arjuna –

11 All belonging to the ranks
Of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman –
And Aśvatthāman
Witnessed it too –
And he created a second
Mahā-horrific river of blood.

12 Traumatised by the fierce clash
Between Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
And Pārtha-Arjuna,
Warriors of both sides fled helter-skelter.

13 What a massacre!
Chariot-horses!
Charioteers!
Horse-riders!
Elephant-drivers killed,
elephants unharmed!
Elephants killed,
their drivers unscathed!

14 O rājā! A bloody slaughter
Of human beings
By Pārtha-Arjuna!
Downed by his arrows,
Chariot-heroes thudded on the field.

15 The horses' harnesses snapped,
The steeds panicked on the field.
Seeing this feat
Of gainer-of-glory-in-battle Pārtha-Arjuna,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,

16 Valiant Aśvatthāman
Swiftly advanced towards
Finest-of-victorious-heroes Arjuna
And aiming his massive
Gold-filigreed bow

17 Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
Targeted Arjuna with arrows
Shot in all directions.
Mahārāja! With a feathered shaft
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
Wounded Arjuna

18 In the chest.
Accurately
Ruthlessly
He pierced Pārtha-Arjuna.
O Bharata descendant!
Grievously injured by Droṇa's son,
Alert-in-reacting

19 Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna
Responded
With a fierce swarm of arrows
And sliced the bow
Of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.

20 His bow shattered,
Droṇa's son picked up
A thunderbolt-like
Parigha-spiked-iron-club
And hurled it at
Diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

21 O rājā!
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna saw
The Jāmbu-nada-gold-decorated
Spiked iron club
Whirling towards him,
And he smiled,
And disintegrated it in mid-air.

22 O rājā!
Struck by the arrows
Of Pārtha-Arjuna,
The *parigha*-club shattered
And its pieces fell on the field
Like rock-fragments
Of a mountain summit
Splintered by a thunderbolt.

23 Mahārāja!
The mahā-chariot-hero
Son of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
Targeted dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
With a divine Aindra-missile.

24 O rājā! Pulverising the Aindra-
Missile net, Pārtha-Arjuna swiftly
Shrouded Aśvatthāman's chariot
With a devastating arrow-shower.

25 O rājā! Arjuna neutralised
that Aindra-network
of arrows by fitting
his Gāṇḍīva-bow
with a celestial
Mahendra-missile.

26 But Aśvatthāman retaliated
with a counter-shower
of neutralising arrows
and, brilliantly,
wounded Krishna with a hundred,
and Arjuna with three hundred arrows.

27 Targeting a hundred arrows
at Aśvatthāman vulnerable parts,
Arjuna, in the presence of your sons,
fired a volley
at his horses,
charioteer, bow and bowstring.

28 Destroyer-of-the-finest-heroes
Pāṇḍava Arjuna
struck his foe's vulnerable parts,
and with a *bhalla*-arrow
toppled the charioteer
from his chariot-seat.

29 Then Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
took the reins
in his hands and deluged Krishna and Arjuna
with arrows.
We all witnessed
this wonderful spectacle –

30 Holding the reins
and fighting Phālguna-Arjuna
at the same time!
O rājā!
The warriors on the field, awe-struck,
offered him their pūjā-respect.

31 Doer-of-dreadful-deeds
Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
also known as Jaya
the Victorious One,
smiled and, with a razor arrow,
he sliced
the reins in the hands
of Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman.

32 O descendant of Bharata!
The arrow-inflicted horses fled.
Havoc prevailed
in your army's ranks.

33 The victory-flushed Pāṇḍavas
swooped upon your soldiers,
shooting arrows
from all sides,
eager to heap victory
upon victory.

34 Mahārāja!
The victory-inspired Pāṇḍavas
inflicted defeat
upon defeat
on the ranks
of your son Duryodhana.

35 Mahārāja!
O lord of the earth!
All this happened
in the presence of your sons,
and Subala's son Śakuni
and Karṇa.

36 O lord of men!
Despite all the efforts
of your sons,
your mahā-army
fled the field
in utter rout.

37 Mahārāja!
With all the warriors
running confusedly
all over the field,
your sons' huge army
was in a shambles.

38 The charioteer's son Karṇa
kept shouting,
"Stop! Stop!"
Terrorised
by the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍavas,
they did not stop.

39 Mahārāja!
Seeing Duryodhana's ranks
in utter panic,
the victory-flushed Pāṇḍavas
broke
into loud war-cries.

40 Then Duryodhana lovingly
said to Karṇa: "Karṇa!
See how the Pāñcālas
are exterminating my soldiers.

41 O mahā-muscled
destroyer of your enemies!
You are here –
and they are fleeing!
You must now do
what needs to be done.

42 O Puruṣottama!
O finest of men!
O brave one!
They are crying out for you,
thousands of our warriors,
battered and beaten
on the battlefield
by the Pāṇḍavas."

43 Hearing these mahā-serious words
of Duryodhana,
Karṇa seemed to smile.
He turned
to the Madra-rājā Śalya
and said:

44 "Lord of men!
Look at the strength
of my arms,
look at the power of my weapons!
I will kill the Pāñcālas
and the Pāṇḍavas today –

45 No doubt of that!
O tiger among men!
Drive my chariot there.
All will turn out well."
Mahārāja! Saying this,
the valiant son of a charioteer,

46 Heroic Karṇa, picked up
his old and incomparable bow
called the Vijaya,
the bow of victory,
caressed it again and again,
and strung it.

47 He took the vow of truth
and reassured
his soldiers.
Then that limitlessly mahā-powerful
and self-confident hero
readied the Bhārgava-missile.

48 O rājā! In that mahā-clash,
from that missile
issued thousands,
lakhs, crores,
and tens of crores
of sharp arrows.

49 Shrouded by those flaming
kaṅka-feathered
and peacock-plumed arrows,
the Pāṇḍavas
were completely at a loss
what to do.

50 O lord of the earth!
Shouts of "Hai! Hai!"
and loud lamentation rose
from the Pāñcālas
sorely afflicted
by the Bhārgava-missile.

51 O rājā!
Thousands of toppling
elephants and horses,
and chariots
and soldiers,
O tiger-among-men,

52 Made the battlefield shake.
O rājā!
The mahā-powerful-army
of the Pāṇḍavas
was troubled
and terrified.

53 O tiger-among-men!
Foe-exterminating
finest-of-heroes Karṇa
swept radiantly
like a smokeless fire
consuming his enemies.

54 Like elephants trapped
in a forest fire,
the Pāñcālas and Cedis,
trapped
in the Karṇa-conflagration,
suffocated and fainted.

55 O tiger-among-men!
Those incomparable warriors
roared like tigers.
They screamed
terror-stricken
on the field of battle;

56 They ran about,
O rājā,
in crazed confusion,
wailing like creatures
at the time
of universal dissolution.

57 Seeing the soldiers
indiscriminately massacred
on the battlefield,
all creatures,
beasts and birds,
shuddered in fear.

58 Butchered
by the charioteer's son Karṇa,
the Sṛñjayas
again and again
cried out to Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna,

59 Like sense-bereft creatures
wailing their woes
to the rājā of *preta*-spirits
in the kingdom
of the *preta*-rājā.
Hearing the screams
of the warriors
multilated by Karṇa's arrows

60 And seeing the carnage
created by the Bhargava-missile,
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

61 "O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Look at the horror
of the Bhārgava-missile!
There is no anti-missile
to neutralise it
in battle.

62 Krishna, see! Anger-inflamed,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
is like the god
of death Antaka-Yama himself,
a veritable terror
in this mahā-clash.

63 He keeps urging his horses,
he keeps staring
at me.
I do not think
I should avoid
facing him in battle.

64 A living soldier
either loses or wins a battle.
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna!
A loser is as good as dead.
Where's victory
for him?"

65 Hearing these words
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
Krishna replied appropriately
to the finest-of-intelligent men,
foe-crushing
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:

66 "Parthā-Arjuna!
Karṇa has demoralised
Kuntī's son, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Go to him first;
solace him.
Then kill Karṇa."

67 O lord of the earth!
With these words
Krishna drove towards Yudhiṣṭhira
to meet him,
and give time to Karṇa
to exhaust himself fighting.

68 Following the advice
of Keśava-Krishna,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
left the battlefield
and went to meet
arrow-wounded Yudhiṣṭhira.

69 Before leaving the battlefield
and proceeding
to meet Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son Arjuna surveyed the field
but could not see Yudhiṣṭhira
anywhere.

70 O descendant of Bharata!
This was after
he brilliantly defeated
his guru's son Aśvatthāman,
a warrior
whom even
thunderbolt-wielding Indra
would find
very difficult to defeat.

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 Sañjaya continued:
After performing
the mahā-difficult task
of defeating
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman –
a task impossible for others –
brilliant-bow-wielder
heroic Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
surveyed his own army.

2 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
standing at the head
of his troops,
encouraged the brave warriors,
and ordered the chariot-heroes
to be ready.

3 Not finding his eldest brother,
the Ajamīḍha-descendant Yudhiṣṭhira,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭamāli-Arjuna
turned to Bhīma and asked:
"Where is the rājā?"

4 Bhīma replied:
"Wounded by the arrows of Karṇa,
Dharma's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira has left.
I do not know
if he is still alive."

5 "If that is so," said Arjuna,
"then rush immediately
and bring me news
of the incomparable Kaurava rājā.
Wounded by Karṇa,
he must be in the safety of his camp.

6 Though grievously wounded
by the arrows of Droṇa,
he remained
on the battlefield,
hopeful of victory,
until Droṇa was killed.

7 Today our mahā-noble-minded
Pāṇḍava chief
is gravely imperilled by Karṇa.
Go immediately, Bhīma.
I will stay here,
and confront our enemies."

8 Bhīma replied: "O mahā-noble,
bull-brave Bharata!
You, Arjuna, should go to the rājā.
If I go,
these heroes here will think
I am frightened of them."

9 Arjuna said to Bhīma:
"The Saṁśaptakas
are ranged in front of me.
I am not leaving
the battlefield
without killing my enemies."

10 Bhīma replied to Arjuna:
"O excellent Kaurava!
Let me attend to all
the Saṁśaptakas.
You go,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

11 Sañjaya continued:
Hearing the words of Bhīma,
in the presence of his enemies,
that he would complete
the difficult task of killing the Saṁśaptakas,
Pārtha-Arjuna,

12 Noble-hearted, mahā-ātmaned,
monkey-war-flagged Arjuna,
repeated the promise
of his truly valiant
brother Bhīma
to the limitlessly radiant
Vṛṣṇi-chief Nārāyaṇa-Krishna,
and prepared to go
to the finest-of-Kauravas
Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 "Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna! Urge the horses!
Leave this ocean-huge army! Keśava!
Drive me to Ajātaśatru rājā Yudhiṣṭhira."

14 Before urging the horses,
the chief of all the Dāśārhas
turned to Bhīma and said:
"Nothing special for you, Bhīma –
kill them all,
Pārtha-Arjuna's enemies."

15 O rājā! Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
swiftly sped towards
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
The horses of the chariot
galloped with the speed
of Garuḍa.

16 O Indra-among-rājās!
Leaving foe-crushing Bhīma
on the field
after advising
the wolf-waisted hero
how to face the enemy,

17 The two unparalleled heroes
drove to where
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira lay all alone.
Alighting from the chariot,
they touched the feet
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

18 Seeing those two tigers-among-men
bull-brave heroes safe and sound,
and the twin Krishnas
approaching him
like the twin Aśvins
approaching Vāsava-Indra,

19 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira welcomed them,
like Vivasvat the sun
welcoming the twin Aśvins,
like guru Bṛhaspati welcoming
Śakra-Indra and Viṣṇu after they killed
the mahā-antigod Jambha.

20 Tormentor-of-his-foes
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
was delighted
because he thought Karṇa
had been killed,
and he spoke to them happily.

21 Forefront-fighting warriors,
pink-rimmed large-eyed
Krishna and Arjuna,
arrived soaked in blood,
pierced with arrows.
Yudhiṣṭhira spoke to them happily.

22 Seeing mahā-self-assured Arjuna
and Keśava-Krishna together,
he was convinced
that Gāṇḍīva-bow-wielding Arjuna
had killed
Adhiratha's son Karṇa.

23 O bull-brave Bharata!
With that in mind,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
smiled and welcomed
foe-crushing Krishna and Arjuna
with pūjā-respect.

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"You are welcome,
Devakī's son Krishna!
Welcome, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Your darshan
is such a great pleasure, O Acyuta!

2 You are alive and safe, and you
Have killed the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,
who was a fierce serpent
Well-versed in all war-weapons,

3 The pride of the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
their coat of armour,
their protector,
himself guarded by brilliant bowmen
Vṛṣasena and Suṣeṇa.

4 Trained in all war-weapons
by Rāma-Paraśurāma,
he became a mahā-valiant,
undefeatable chariot-hero,
the finest of them all,
applauded the world over,

5 The saviour of the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the leader of their armies,
the destroyer of enemies,
indeed the grinder down
of all opposition,

6 Always ready to harass us
and promote
the welfare of Duryodhana.
Even Vāsava-Indra and the gods
suffered against him
in any mahā-battle.

7 Blazing like fire he was,
powerful like wind,
as unfathomable
as the Pātāla underworld,
enhancer of the joys
of his friends,

8 Like Antaka-Yama the god of death
to my friends.
After killing Karṇa
in the mahā-battle,
you are to me like two gods
who have slain an antigod.

9 O undeteriorating Acyuta-Krishna!
O Arjuna!
Karṇa attacked me today
like Antaka-Yama
bent on the annihilation
of all creatures.

10 He shredded my war-flag,
killed both
my chariot-wheel protectors
and my horses –
all this he did in the presence
of Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,

11 Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
valiant Śikhaṇḍin,
the sons of Draupadī,
and the Pāñcālas –
all, all of them.

12 O mahā-muscled one!
This mahā-hero Karṇa
in this mahā-battle,
defeated all his enemies
and, despite all my efforts,
humiliated me too.

13 O finest of warriors Arjuna!
He pursued me all over
the battlefield – he did –
and wherever I was
he mocked me
with bitter words.

14 If I am alive today,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
it is because of Bhīma.
What more can I say?
This shame is more
than I can bear.

15 All these thirteen years,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
fear of him has made me
sleepless at night,
and miserable
during the day.

16 O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
I hate him!
I burn with hate for him!
Like the Vādhrīnasa-
rhinoceros seeking
its own death,
I deliberately sought
to confront Karṇa.

17 How to kill Karṇa!
How to kill Karṇa!
That's how I passed
all my long long days.

18 O Kaunteya-Arjuna!
Waking or asleep,
all I saw was Karṇa.
This whole universe –
I saw nothing in it
but Karṇa.

19 O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Fear of Karṇa
haunts me
wherever I go.
There he is –
standing in front of me!

20 My chariot and my horses
he destroyed,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
that never-retreating hero.
I was lucky to escape
with my life.

21 What use is my life?
What use my kingdom?
Karṇa is the paragon
of the battlefield,
Karṇa has mocked
and shamed me.

22 Even Bhīṣma, Kṛpa and Droṇa
never shamed me
in battle,
as that mahā-chariot-hero
son of a charioteer
shamed me today.

23 Which is why,
Kaunteya-Arjuna,
I want you
to tell me in detail
how you killed Karṇa
today.

24 However did you manage
to kill him? –
He is valiant like Śakra-Indra,
indomitable like Yama,
expert in war-weapons
like Rāma-Paraśurāma.

25 He is renowned
as a mahā-chariot-hero,
he knows all there is to know
about warfare,
he is brilliant in bowcraft,
a unique leader;

26 Chosen by Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself
and his sons
to confront you.
Tell me, how did you manage
to kill this mahā-powerful
son of Rādhā?

27 O bull-brave Arjuna!
On the battlefield
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
was convinced
Karṇa was the only one
who would kill you.

28 O tiger-among-men!
Kuntī's son!
How did you kill him?
I want to know
from you in detail
how you killed Karṇa.

29 O tiger-among-men!
Did you slice his head
in front of his allies,
like a lion
crunching the head
of a *ruru*-deer?

30 The charioteer's son Karṇa
was searching for you
everywhere on the field,
promising to give
six elephant-huge bulls
to anyone
who would lead him to you.
With *kaṅka*-feathered arrows

31 Did you wipe out
that son of a charioteer?
Is he sprawled there dead
on the battlefield?
A pleasing deed you've done,
killing the charioteer's son!

32 How did you do it –
killing that arrogant son of a charioteer
whom praise had made boastful,
who was seeking you out everywhere?

33 *Tāta*! Dear brother!
Have you really killed
that criminal who offered
as reward a golden chariot
pulled by elephant-huge horses
to anyone giving information
leading to you,
and who kept challenging you?

34 Have you really killed that
self-glorifying criminal
in the assembly of the Kauravas,
the favourite of Suyodhana-Duryodhana?

35 Have your red-shafted
sky-speeding arrows bloodied him
and felled and mangled
criminal Karṇa?
Have you shattered both arms
of Duryodhana?

36 Remember how this braggart,
puffed with pride,
to please Duryodhana
in the assembly of rājās,
foolishly promised,
'I will kill Phālguna-Arjuna'?
Have you today
silenced him forever?

37 O son of Indra!
Remember the vow
of this low-minded scoundrel,
'I will not let anyone wash my feet
until I kill Pārtha-Arjuna'?
Have you killed him today?

38 Remember this wicked rascal telling
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī before the Kaurava
Heroes: 'Why don't you leave these
Lost and lowly and lustreless Pāṇḍavas'?

39 The Karṇa who vowed,
'I will not leave the field today
without killing
Krishna and Pārtha-Arjuna' –
have your arrows shredded
that vicious Karṇa's body?

40 Do you recall
the fierce clash today
between the Sṛñjayas and the Kauravas,
leading to my rout?
Have you ensured the death
of that wicked-ātmaned Karṇa?

41 Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna!
With your flaming arrows
fired from the Gāṇḍīva-bow,
have you today severed
the dazzling flesh-ear-ringed head
of ill-minded Karṇa?

42 Wounded by Karṇa's arrows,
how often I thought of you,
O brave one,
hoping you would kill him!
Have you fulfilled my desire?
Is he dead?

43 And Suyodhana-Duryodhana! –
Protected by Karṇa,
with what contempt he treated us!
Have you destroyed today
that powerful support
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana?

44 Have you really today finished off
that son of a charioteer
whoi in the Kaurava sabhā
taunted us, saying
we were nothing but impotent
hollow sesame seeds?

45 Remember how that wicked-ātmaned
charioteer's son
smiled as he ordered Duḥśāsana,
'Subala's son Śakuni
has won Yājñaseni-Draupadī.
Go, drag her here!'
Have you finally
killed him today?

46 O mahātmā! Have you killed him,
that finest of famed war-experts,
the fool who mocked Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
for describing him half a chariot-hero?

47 O Phālguna-Arjuna!
Quench the fire of revenge
in my heart,
fanned by the wind of shame.
Say to me, say to me,
'I have killed Karṇa today.'

48 O hero of heroes!
This is the news
I long to hear.
Tell me how you killed him.
I am all ears
like Bhagavān Indra
waiting for the news
of Vṛtra's death."

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

Transcreated by P. Lal

1 Hearing these words
(Sañjaya continued)
of calm-in-dharma
but now enraged Yudhiṣṭhira,
exceedingly valiant
chariot-hero mahātmā
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna said
to hard-to-defeat
large-minded Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "While I was fighting
the Saṁśaptakas,
O rājā, suddenly
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
leader of the Kauravas,
appeared before me,
shooting volleys of arrows
that stung with the ferocity
of venomous serpents.

3 They surrounded my thunder-
reverberating chariot.
They encircled me,
and challenged me.
They were five hundred.
I slew them all.
And then I proceeded,
O lord of the earth,
against Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.

4 O Indra-among-men!
Like a lead elephant
attacking a lion,
he pounced upon me,
sure he would win.
His aim, mahārāja,
was to save the Kauravas
whom I had targeted
for specific slaughter.

5 O Bharata descendant!
Later, that valiant
finest of the Kauravas,
that hard-to-subdue
son of the ācārya
shot arrows at me
and Janārdana-Krishna,
arrows that spat
poison and fire.

6 Eight bullock carts,
each pulled by eight bullocks,
supplied the thousands
of arrows he fired.
Like a storm scattering
flocks of clouds,
the arrows I fired
dispersed all his arrows
in mid-air.

7 Like a dark cloud-mass
in the monsoon season
drenching the earth
with torrents of rain,
he showered his arrows,
pulling his bowstring taut
with the skill of his training,
his knowledge of weapons,
his strength and dedication.

8 So swift was he
that we could not tell
which side he fired from,
right or left.
Nor could we tell
when a shaft was selected,
when it was fitted,
when aimed,
when fired.

9 All that we saw
of the bow of the son
of Droṇa, Aśvatthāman,
was a permanent maṇḍala,
a perfect circle.
With five sharp arrows
he wounded me,
and with five more
Vāsudeva-Krishna.

10 But I wasted no time.
In a flash I fired
thirty thunderbolt-arrows
which found their mark.
With the arrows protruding
from his pierced body,
he looked on the field
like a porcupine
bristling with quills.

11 When he saw his body
and the bodies of the warriors
streaming with blood
from the wounds inflicted
by my swarms of arrows,
Aśvatthāman
quickly retreated
and joined the ranks
of Karṇa's chariot-division.

12 Seeing the soldiers panicking,
and the horses
and elephants fleeing,
Karṇa attacked me
with a force of fifty
special chariot-heroes.
That enemy-crushing hero
pounced on me
with incredible speed.

13 I succeeded in killing
that crack force
of fifty chariot-heroes.
I slipped away,
and came here to see you.
The Pāñcāla warriors,
terrorised by Karṇa,
are fleeing like cows
from a rampaging lion.

14 The Prabhadrakas, O rājā,
facing Karṇa,
were like terrified men
facing the gaping jaws
of the god of death.
Karṇa has already
despatched seven hundred
of those chariot-heroes
to the abode of death.

15 O rājā! Nothing troubled
the charioteer's son
till he confronted us.
When I heard that he
had clashed with you,
and that earlier
you were grievously wounded
in a clash
with Aśvatthāman,

16 Then, O rājā
of inconceivable valour,
I thought it best
you had left cruel Karṇa
and come here.
O Pāṇḍava! Today
I witnessed on the field
a display of Karṇa's
incredible missile.

17 There is no Sṛñjaya
who can confront
the mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa in battle.
O rājā! Order
Śini's grandson Sātyaki
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna
to protect the wheels
of my chariot.

18 Order the two heroes
Yudhāmanyu
and Uttamaujas
to protect my rear.
O mahā-confident one!
That finest of chariot-heroes,
that difficult-to-defeat
warrior – if I can find
him today on the field –

19 The charioteer's son –
I will fight him today,
O Indra-among-rulers,
as thunderbolt-wielding Indra
fought against Vṛtra,
the antigod, in the past.
O descendant of Bharata!
O Yudhiṣṭhira!
This is my decision.

20 Come and see
how I fight
the charioteer's son
on the battlefield today.
See who wins!
The Prabhadrakas
are attacking Karṇa
as if entering
a mahā-serpent's mouth.

21 O descendant of Bharata!
Six thousand princes
are battling to enter
the realm of heaven!
O rājā! If today
I am unable to kill
Karṇa and his allies
on the field
of battle,

22 O lion-among-rājās,
then may I be cursed
to suffer the doom
of a breaker of promises.
I need your command.
Say I will win!
The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
are poised on the field
to devour Bhīma.

23 O lion-like Indra-among-men!
Before they do that,
I will kill Sauti-Karṇa
and destroy all our enemies.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 Sañjaya continued
When he heard that Karṇa
of infinite energy
was still alive,
radiantly powerful
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
wounded by the arrows
of Karṇa, was furious
with Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and said to him:

2 "*Tāta*! Dear brother!
Your army has been routed.
You have not done well
by running away.
You fled out of fear.
Unable to defeat
the charioteer's son,
you forsook Bhīma,
and you fled.

3 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Receiver of affection
in the womb of Kuntī,
you did not do right.
The truth is: Unable
to defeat Karṇa,
the charioteer's son,
you left Bhīma behind
and fled the field.

4 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Remember your words to me
in the forest of Dvaita?
'I will kill Karṇa.
All I need is a chariot.'
And now you do this –
You break your promise,
you leave Bhīma behind,
and run away in fear!

5 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Why did you not say
in the forest of Dvaita,
'I will not fight Karṇa'?
Had you said that,
we would have considered
the matter carefully,
and we would have made
alternative arrangements.

6 O brave one!
The truth is:
You made me a promise.
You did not keep it.
If you never intended
to keep your promise,
Why did you come here
and let our enemies
crush us on a rock?

7 We blessed you, Arjuna,
We had high hopes of you.
You let us down.
You are like a tree
bursting with flowers,
giving flowers to a man
who comes to you hoping
he will get fruit.
All he gets is flowers.

8 I wanted a kingdom.
You offered me meat
hanging on a hook.
You offered me poison
hidden in a meal.
Instead of a kingdom,
all I got was rubbish,
all I got was a nightmare
of a terrible doom.

9 Like a seed staying alive
hoping for the rains
sent by the gods,
for thirteen long years
we waited and hoped,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
And you let us down.
You drowned all of us
in abysmal hell.

10 You wicked man!
Seven days after your birth,
a voice from the sky
said to Pṛthā-Kuntī:
'The son born to you
will be as illustrious
as Vāsava-Indra.
He will defeat
all his powerful enemies.

11 With his superior energy
he will defeat the gods
in Khāṇḍavaprastha,
and all the creatures there.
And he will conquer
the Bhadras, Kaliṅgas
and Kekayas.
He will kill
the Kauravas as well.

12 No archer anywhere
will ever excel him.
No one anywhere
will ever defeat him.
In complete control
of his mind and senses,
he will master all knowledge,
and rule over all
the creatures of the world.

13 O Kuntī!
This mahātmā boy stable as Meru
will have the radiance
    of Soma the moon
the swiftness
    of Vāyu the wind
the patience of Earth
the glory of the Sun
Kubera's prosperity and Indra's valour
and Viṣṇu's strength.

14 Your son
is like Viṣṇu
the son of Aditi –
he is the slayer
    of all his foes.
This infinitely
    illustrious boy
will bring victory
    to his friends
and destruction to his enemies,
he will be the founder
    of a dynasty.'

15 That sky-voice
reached the ears
of the tapasyā-practisers
on Śataśṛṅga mountain.
To what purpose?
Nothing has come true.
Even the gods speak lies.

16 Other excellent ṛṣis
    praised you also
        and offered you pūjā-respect.
I believed them and never
    felt threatened
        by Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
But I never imagined
    you would flee in fear
        from Adhiratha's son Karṇa.

17 It was Suyodhana-Duryodhana
who once predicted,
'Phālguna-Arjuna
will never face Karṇa
who is much too powerful.'
What a fool I was!
I did not think
this was ever possible.
I should have believed him.

18 And so I suffer!
Enemies on all sides!
I am in hell!
You should have said
at the very beginning,
very clearly,
'It is not possible
for me to fight
the charioteer's son.'

19 Then I would not have asked
for support from
the Sṛñjayas, Kekayas
and other allies.
Things being what they are,
in this battle now,
what else can I do
in the fight against
the charioteer's son,

20 Rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
and other warriors
gathered here for battle?
Dhik! Shame on me!
Shame on my life!
I have become
a slave of Karṇa,
this son
of a charioteer,

21 And the witnesses
are the Kauravas
and my allies,
all gathered for battle.
The only support
I have now is Bhīma.
He is the one
who has protected me
in every way.

22 He is the one
who saved me,
pinning down Karṇa
with his sharp arrows.
He does not fear
losing his life
on the field of battle
as he moves about freely,
intent on his mission,

23 Blood streaming
on his body, brandishing
his mace,
like Antaka-Yama
on the day of dissolution.
And even as he battles
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
I hear again and again
his mahā-roars of victory.

24 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Were Abhimanyu,
mahā-chariot-hero,
finest of all
heroes of the chariot –
were he alive today,
I would not have had
to endure
this terrible shame.

25 Were Ghaṭotkaca alive,
fighting on the field,
I would not have had
to flee as I did.
That son of Bhīma
is a mahā arms-expert,
he knows how to advance,
he is like you
in every way.

26 Were he here, our foes
could never succeed,
however hard they try;
they would be terrified,
they would close their eyes.
So valiantly
did this hero fight
at dead of night,
his foes fled in fear.

27 When he fought Karṇa,
the soldiers
on the battlefield
were stupefied by the swarms
of arrows he fired;
but the undaunted
son of a charioteer
slew him with a divine
śakti-missile.

28 It is my ill luck,
it is my bad karma
that is overpowering me
today.

29 The wicked-ātmaned Karṇa,
Vaikartana-Karṇa,
has treated you today
like a blade of grass,
and insulted me.
He has treated me
as one treats the helpless,
the lost, the one
without any relatives.

30 The friend, the loving relative
Is he who helps in a crisis.
The ancient munis have said so.
This is the dharma followed
By all who are known to be good.

31 Your chariot is crafted
by Trvaṣṭrā-Viśvakarman,
it flies the ape-symbolled war-flag;
in this splendid vehicle
is the gold-worked sword,
and the four-arms length
Gāṇḍīva bow;

32 Your charioteer is none other
than Keśava-Krishna.
So what made you flee
in fear from Karṇa?
Pārtha-Arjuna!
My advice is:
Give the Gāṇḍīva
to Keśava-Krishna,
and you in battle
become the charioteer
of Keśava-Krishna.

33 And let Keśava-Krishna
finish off Karṇa
exactly as the antigod Vrtra
was killed
by the thunderbolt-wielding
lord-of-the-Maruts Indra.
If for any reason
you lack the will
to confront fearful Karṇa
on the battlefield,

34 Hand over the Gāṇḍīva
to any Indra-among-rājās
who knows
how to use weapons
better than you do.
Then the world will not see us
without sons and wives,
without happiness,
without kingdom.

35 We will not plunge then,
O son of Pāṇḍu,
in the hell that is the lot
of unredeemable criminals.
You should have been aborted
in the fifth month!
You should never have entered
the womb of Pṛthā-Kuntī!

36 O wicked-ātmaned prince!
That would been ideal for you! –
instead of this –
fleeing from battle.
Dhik on the Gāṇḍīva!
And shame on the so-called
strength of your arms!
Dhik on all your arrows!
And shame on your ape-symbolled flag,
shame on the chariot Agni presented to you!"

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 Sañjaya continued: No sooner
had white-horse-vehicled Arjuna
heard Yudhiṣṭhira's words
than in a fit of rage
he raised his sword to kill
bull-brave Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 Seeing him enraged, Keśava-Krishna,
who sees into the hearts of men,
said, "Pārtha-Arjuna,
What's this? Lifting your sword?

3 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
I see no enemy in front of you!
Intelligent Bhīma
has ensured
that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
are got rid of.

4 Son of Kuntī! You came here
from the battlefield
to see rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
You have seen him.
You can see the rājā
is alive and well.

5 What's wrong with you?
Have you lost your mind?
Surely you can see this
tiger-valiant tiger-among-kings
is alive and safe.
Surely that is reason to rejoice.

6 Son of Kuntī! I see no one here
who deserves death
at your hands.
Why are you so eager to fight?
Have you lost control
of your mind?

7 Why are you clutching
your mahā-sword so fiercely?
Answer me, brave one!
I am asking you!
Son of Kuntī,
what is it you want to do,

8 O mahā-wonderful hero,
by losing your temper
and brandishing your sword?"
He heard these words
of Krishna and,
looking at Yudhiṣṭhira,

9 Arjuna, angrily,
hissing like a snake,
said to Govinda-Krishna:
"If anyone dares tell me,
'Hand over
your Gāṇḍīva-bow,'

10 I'll cut off his head!
This is the vow
I have made to myself.
In front of you,
this rājā,
O infinitely prowess-possessing

11 Govinda-Krishna,
has said these very words.
I cannot forgive him.
I will kill him –
this dharma-*bhīru*,
this dharma-bereft rājā!

12 O delight of the Yādavas!
Why did I take a vow
if not to keep it?
I have lifted my sword,
I will keep my word,
I will kill this finest of men.

13 Janārdana-Krishna!
Smiter of mortals!
I will abide by my truth,
I will kill Yudhiṣṭhira,
and so free myself
of grief and misery.

14 *Tāta*! Dear Krishna, tell me.
what should I do?
What is right?
You know all about the past
and the future
of this world.

15 I will do whatever
you tell me to do."
Govinda-Krishna said again
to Arjuna: "*Dhik! Dhik!*
Shame on you!
Shame on you!"

16 He continued: "Pārtha-Arjuna!
It seems to me
you are not honouring your elders.
O tiger-among-men!
Anger has overcome you
for no reason whatsoever.

17 Pāṇḍu's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Anyone who knows dharma
will not behave like this,
like you are doing.
You are the non-paṇḍit,
the dharma-bereft one.

18 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
The scoundrel is he
who does
what should not be done,
and does not do
what should be done.

19 You have no idea
of the dharma that is taught
by those who practise dharma,
by all those learned men
who know dharma in the abstract
and in the concrete.

20 Who does not discriminate
between should be done
and should not be done –
he is the unthinking one,
the deluded one,
the fool, O Pārtha-Arjuna.

21 It is not easy to know
what should be done
and what should not be done.
You need the help
of *śruti*-wisdom –
which you do not have.

22 You are ignorant of dharma,
but you think
you are a champion of dharma.
Has it occurred to you, Pārtha-Arjuna,
that dharma never advises
killing a living being?

23 *Tāta*! Dear one!
If you ask me,
not killing a living being
is the highest virtue.
Lie if you have to,
but never kill.

24 O finest of men!
Why are you behaving
like an uncivilised man
and thinking of killing
your elder brother, a rājā
who knows all about dharma?

25 O respect-worthy one!
A man who is not fighting,
who is not an enemy,
who has turned his back
and fled the battlefield,
who has sought asylum,

26 Who has joined his palms
in *añjali* and surrendered,
or who is not in his senses –
the wise never advise
killing any of these.
Your elder brother is all of these.

27 Pārtha-Arjuna!
It was childish of you
to take such a vow.
And now, like a fool,
you want to commit
an act of adharma.

28 Tell me, Pārtha-Arjuna,
how is it that you,
without going
into the difficult subtleties
of dharma, are so ready
to kill your elder brother?

29 Son of Pāṇḍu!
I am trying to explain
to secret of dharma to you.
Bhīṣma can explain it.
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira also
can explain it.

30 So can Vidura,
also known as Kṣattā.
And illustrious Kuntī.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
I will explain it in detail.
Listen carefully.

31 To speak the truth
is good.
Nothing excels truth.
But to know when
to speak the truth
is very difficult indeed.

32 Truth should not be spoken
if its motive
is to deceive.
A lie may be spoken
if its motive
is to help.

33 No blame attaches to lies
spoken on these occasions:
at a marriage, in love-making, to save life,
when all one's wealth is being stolen,
and for Brahmin-benefit –
these five.

34 Lying is permissible
when one's entire wealth
is being threatened.
A lie then is the truth,
and the truth then
is a lie.

35 He is childish who thinks
truth should be spoken,
no matter what.
He knows dharma who knows
when to speak the truth
and when to lie.

36 Not surprising then
that a clear-linking man,
though acting brutally,
gains mahā-merit –
like the hunter Balāka
who slew the blind animal.

37 The utterly unlearned fool
who yearns for dharma
is like the muni Kauśika
practising virtue blindly on the river-bank
and getting mahā-punished.
Not surprising!"

38 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!"
said Arjuna.
"Tell me more about Balāka
and Kauśika on the river-bank,
so that I
can learn from them."

39 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
"There was this hunter Balāka,
O descendant of Bharata,
who killed animals
not because he wanted to,
but to support his wife and children.

40 Devoted to the welfare
of his mother and father,
he faithfully practised
his sva-dharma,
always speaking the truth,
never maligning anyone.

41 Out hunting one day,
after a long fruitless search,
he chanced upon a deer
drinking water,
a blind animal that relied
upon its sense of smell.

42 He had never seen a deer
like that before.
Yet he killed it on the spot.
The blind deer fell,
and instantly from the sky
fell a rain of flowers.

43 To the accompaniment of music
and songs of apsarās,
a splendid chariot arrived
from heaven
to take the hunter
to the realm of the gods.

44 Arjuna, it was said that
in a previous life this creature,
after intense tapasyā,
had obtained a boon
from Self-born Svayambhu Brahmā
to exterminate
the world's creatures, and Brahmā
had struck him blind.

45 Balāka was taken to heaven
because he killed the creature
who wanted to kill the world's creatures.
Dharma is very difficult to understand.

46 There was this tapasyā-practising
Brahmin Kauśika,
not very learned in *śruti*.
He lived
at a river-confluence,
not far from a village.

47 He had taken this vow:
'I will always speak the truth.'
Everywhere,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
he was renowned
as 'the truth-speaker.'

48 It so happened once that,
chased by robbers,
some men fled to the safety
of a forest.
The incensed robbers
pursued them there.

49 Approaching the truth-speaking
Brahmin Kauśika,
they said, '*Bhagavan*,
revered one,
some time ago some men
passed this way.

50 Tell us the truth:
do you know them?'
No sooner
had they asked
than Kauśika promptly
told them the truth –

51 'There, in that dense part,
where you see
these trees, creepers and bushes –
that's where they went.'
Kauśika gave the robbers
the precise details.

52 Well, what I have heard
is that those robbers
ruthlessly killed their victims.
For this mahā-adharma
of speaking the truth
that should not be spoken, Kauśika

53 Had to suffer the torments of hell.
He did not know
the subtleties of dharma.
The fool who has
a poor knowledge of *śruti*
and practical dharma,

54 And will not seek advice
from informed elders,
falls into a mahā-hell.
You have to find a way
of arriving
at a practical morality.

55 For some this practical ideal
is found by discussion and argument.
However,
the majority believe dharma
is found only
in the wisdom of *śruti*.

56 I do not challenge this,
except to say
that *śruti* is not everything.
The precepts of dharma
are meant for the welfare
of all creatures.

57 Where ahiṁsā is,
there dharma is.
That is the fact.
The precepts of dharma
stress ahiṁsā
for all.

58 The world 'dharma' comes
from 'dhṛ' meaning
'support' because dharma
supports and protects;
it protects all creatures.
This is incontestable.

59 Sticking to the letter of dharma
is no way
of following dharma.
Stay away
from the literal dharma-followers
by keeping silent.

60 If speak you have to,
because your silence is suspect,
then it's better
to speak an untruth.
An untruth in this case
is equal to truth.

61 Learned people say
that if a person
vows to do something
but fails to do it,
he cannot expect to get
the fruits of that vow.

62 When one's life is at stake,
or during a marriage,
or when the very existence
of one's family is threatened,
or when joking,
whatever is spoken is not a lie.

63 Those who know dharma
see no adharma in this.
If one joins a band of robbers
by taking an oath,
and breaks from the band
by breaking that oath,

64 Then let him lie
about the oath he took –
that lie is equal to truth.
If that is possible,
one should never surrender
one's wealth to robbers.

65 It is a crime to give wealth
to robbers;
giving to a criminal
defiles the giver.
So, a lie spoken to promote dharma
is not a lie.

66 I wish you well –
which is why I have clarified
the finer points
of dharma
in such detail
for your welfare.

67 After listening to all this,
Pārtha-Arjuna,
tell me: does Yudhiṣṭhira
deserve to be killed by you?"
Arjuna replied:
"You have spoken
as a man of mahā-intelligence,
of mahā-wisdom.

68 You have spoken out of concern
for my welfare.
You are to us like a mother,
like a father.

69 O Krishna!
You are our supreme goal,
our supreme refuge.
There is nothing
in the three worlds
unknown to you.

70 You know all there is
to know, in every way,
about the supreme Dharma.
No, Pāṇḍava Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
does not deserve
to be killed.

71 Tell me how to overcome
my promise-predicament.
Something that is
very close to my heart –
listen to me as I place it
before you.

72 O Dāśārha-Krishna!
You know my vow:
Whoever tells me, 'Pārtha-Arjuna,
give your Gāṇḍīva
to whoever excels you
in valour and weapons-lore,'

73 I will, with all my strength,
kill him, O Keśava-Krishna.
Bhīma has taken a vow too.
He will kill anyone
who calls him a '*tūbaraka*',
a hairless eunuch.
In your very presence,
just now, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
said repeatedly,
'Hand your bow over to another.'

74 O Keśava-Krishna!
I could not live
if I were to kill
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Even if the murder
were forgiven, my mind
would never know peace.
My valour has vanished.
I am so confused.

75 O Krishna! O finest
of dharma-knowers Krishna!
Advise me, help me.
Make true my vow
and at the same time, Krishna,
make me and my brother,
Pāṇḍu's eldest son,
my eldest brother,
both stay alive."

76 "O valiant one,"
said Vāsudeva-Krishna,
"rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
pierced with sharp arrows,
is depressed and exhausted,
specially because
the charioteer's son
assailed him with arrows
while he was retreating.

77 He was wounded and distressed,
and rebuked you with words
he should not have used.
He did so in order
to provoke you to anger,
to make you kill Karṇa.
Had he not done so,
he would not have succeeded
in rousing you, Arjuna.

78 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the eldest Pāṇḍava,
is convinced only you
will be able to kill
despicable Karṇa.
And so, in his anger,
he used the words
he should not have used.

79 Karṇa is always
yearning to fight
and hard to defeat.
This war is a dice-game.
The key player is Karṇa.
Kill him – and the Kauravas
are certain to lose.
This was in the mind
of Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

80 That is why, Arjuna,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
does not deserve
to die at your hands.
But you have your vow
which you must fulfil.
So a way must be found
to make him dead yet alive.
Listen to me.

81 In this world of humans,
a man is alive
so long as he is honoured
with deserved respect.
But when he receives
mahā-dishonour
instead of respect,
then he is truly
dead though alive.

82 You, and Bhīma,
Nakula and Sahadeva
and all the world's heroes
have always respected
king Yudhiṣṭhira
with the deepest sincerity.
Now is the time
for you to insult him
just a little.

83 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
You have always
addressed Yudhiṣṭhira as 'thou'.
Address him today as 'you'.
An elder addressed as 'you'
is as good as dead.

84 O enhancer of Kuru-glory!
Speak exactly
as I have advised
towards Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Insult this man of dharma
with this adharma.

85 This finest of *śruti*-advice
is given in the *śruti*
of Atharvan and Aṅgiras.
Those who desire their own welfare
should follow it
unquestioningly.

86 That *śruti* says:
'To address an elder,
a superior or a guru
as "you" is to kill him
without killing him.'
You know dharma,
so act according to dharma.
Speak to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

87 Addressed in this manner,
O Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
will feel as if
he has just died.
Later, of course,
you can touch his feet
and beg his forgiveness
and speak as you should.

88 O son of Kuntī!
Your elder brother
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
is an understanding man.
He is not one
to nurse a grudge against you.
Free from the blame
of speaking a lie
and killing a brother,
you can now proceed
with your real task
of killing Karṇa."

SECTION SEVENTY

1 Praising the advice
of Janārdana-Krishna,
offered in friendship,
Pṛthā's son Arjuna,
turning to Dharmarāja
Yudhiṣṭhira, spoke
these words so harsh
and bitter as he
had never before spoken:

2 "Rājā!
Stop abusing me!
You have no right!
You are a safe two miles away
from the thick of battle!
Only Bhīma,
who is fighting those heroic
lords of the earth,

3 Who is assailing his enemies
and killing scores upon scores
of world-rulers,
chariot-hero paragons,
expert elephant-warriors,
leading horsemen and heroes,

4 Thousands of elephants (killing whom
he roars like a lion),
Kāmboja cavalry (who perish
before him, like deer before a lion),

5 Only Bhīma,
that wonderful hero
who brandishing his mace
leaps from his chariot
and destroys elephants
and horses and chariots
in difficult-to-do deeds
of indescribable valour
(deeds which of course
you can never do),

6 Only Bhīma,
that Vājin-Indra-like hero
who with magnificent sword
and *cakra* and bow
massacres elephant-riders
and cavalry and charioteers,
and tramples his enemies
and crushes them
with his bare hands,

7 Only mahā-powerful Bhīma,
whose valour equals that
of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera
and Antaka-Yama,
who is incomparable
in the slaughter of enemies –
only he has the right
to insult me –
and not you, never! –
because you –
you always need well-wishers
and friends
to protect you and look after you.

8 Only Bhīma can insult me –
for he, alone, all by himself,
is routing the armies
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
their mahā-chariot-heroes, horses,
elephants, and foot-soldiers.

9 Only foe-annihilating Bhīma
has the right to insult me –
for he is the one destroying
the dark-blue-cloud elephants
of the hostile Kaliṅgas, Baṅgas,
Aṅgas, Niṣādas and Magadhas.

10 From his splendid chariot
that valiant hero
showers handfuls of arrows
like torrents of rain
on the enemies' ranks
in that mahā-battle.

11 Only that Bhīma
who shreds with his arrows
the heads and bodies
and trunks of eight hundred
elephants – only he
has the right to insult me.

12 O rājā! Nakula,
eager for battle
and fearless of life,
is killing elephants
and horses and warriors.
He too has the right.

13 And Sahadeva also
has performed remarkable feats.
A valiant warrior,
always on the battlefield.
He came, but said nothing.
See, so different from you!

14 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Sātyaki,
the sons of Draupadī,
Yudhāmanyu, Uttamaujas,
Śikhaṇḍin – they are here,
straight from the battlefield.
They have the right, not you.

15 O Bharata descendant!
According to the learned,
the strength of a Brahmin
is found in his words,
the strength of a Ksatriya
lies in his arms.
You are all words,
cruel words – and you
do not know me at all.

16 My wives and my sons,
my life and my body,
I have placed at your service.
And yet you
with your arrow-sharp words
humiliate me.
Never have I received
any kind of happiness
at all from you.

17 Go, sleep with Draupadī,
and keep insulting me!
For your sake I kill
the mahā-chariot-heroes,
and what do I get,
O Bharata descendant?
Insult and suspicion.
Never any happiness,
so far as I remember.

18 O Nara-deva!
O god-among-men!
Only to please you,
and true to his vow, Bhīṣma
revealed to the mahātmā
son of Drupada,
Śikhaṇḍin, the way
to kill him. With my help
Śikhaṇḍin killed Bhīṣma.

19 I do not approve
of you as a rājā.
Addicted to gambling,
you brought ruin on yourself.
Aided by the wicked,
you committed the crime,
and now, with our help,
you want to sail safe
on the enemy-ocean.

20 Did not Sahadeva warn you
of the vicious adharma
that comes from gambling?
You did not listen
to the list of evils
that delight the wicked.
Which is the reason
why all of us now
suffer so shamefully.

21 O son of Pāṇḍu!
When did we get
even the littlest
of happiness from you?
You were the obsessed
victim of gambling.
Dupe of dice-play,
how easy for you now
to revile all of us!

22 Look at the bodies
of our enemies, mangled
and bleeding on the field!
You are the one
guilty of this massacre –
a crime that not only
heaps blame on us
but ensures the doom
of the Kaurava race.

23 Doomed the easterners,
destroyed the southerners,
butchered the northerners,
massacred the westerners
What a battle they fought –
our troops and their troops –
a battle the likes of which
was never witnessed before.

24 O Indra-among-men!
O rājā!
O you lucky gambler!
You gamble,
You lose the kingdom,
We suffer.
Don't aggravate us now,
O ill-fated one,
with words that sting us
like cruel whips."

25 Screne-minded ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
(continued Sañjaya)
spoke these harsh and bitter
weak-in-dharma words
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and felt guilty
and sorry for saying
all that he said.

26 Arjuna, the son
of the rājā of the gods,
started sighing heavily
like a hissing snake.
He unsheathed his sword.
Krishna noticed this,
and said, "What's this?
Unsheathing
your sky-blue sword?

27 What's troubling you?
Answer me.
What are you up to?
I'll tell you what to do."
Addressed in this manner
by finest-of-men
Puruṣottama-Keśava-
Krishna, Arjuna
said sadly:

28 "I will destroy
this body of mine
that has behaved
so utterly shamefully."
Hearing these words
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
finest-of-dharma-knowers
Krishna said:

29 "O Pārtha-Arjuna!
What is wrong with you?
Why this gross despair
because you addressed
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira as 'you'?
Thinking of suicide?
O Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
no good man will ever
think like you.

30 O bravest of heroes!
If, dismayed by dharma,
you had indeed
killed your eldest
brother Yudhiṣṭhira,
dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
sliced him with your sword,
tell me: what would you
have done next?

31 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Dharma is subtle,
very difficult to grasp,
specially by the ignorant.
Listen to me carefully.
He who commits suicide
is doomed to a hell
more horrible than he
who murders a brother.

32 So, Pārtha-Arjuna,
start praising yourself,
speak of your virtues
in front of everyone. –
As good as suicide!"
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
welcomed these words
of Krishna and,
laying down his bow,

33 The son of Śakra-Indra
said to the finest-
of-dharma-knowers,
his eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira:
"O rājā! Listen.
O god-among-men!
None excels me in bowcraft
except trident-wielding
Pinākin-Śiva.

34 And with the approval
of mahātmā Śiva,
I can exterminate
in a flash all moving
and unmoving life.
O rājā! I conquered
the lords of all
the directions and placed them
under your control.

35 I made possible
the *dakṣiṇās* offered
at your Rājasūya yajña
and the construction
of your celestial sabhā.
In my hands I carry
a plethora of arrows
and sharp darts
and a stringed bow.

36 On the soles of my feet
are auspicious marks
of war-chariots
and war-flags. No one
can defeat me in battle.
I have killed the northerners,
routed the westerners,
repulsed the easterners,
and crushed the southerners.

37 More than half of the army
have I massacred.
A handful of Saṁśaptakas
is all that remains.
O rājā! the army
of the Bharata dynasty,
which is as radiant as the gods –
I have put to sleep forever
on the field of battle.

38 I choose to destroy
only those who are expert
in use of war-weapons –
which is why not all
the army is destroyed.
Let us go, Krishna,
in our victorious chariot
and swiftly eliminate
the charioteer's son.

39 A happy man today
will be rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
I will make Karṇa
the victim of my arrows
on the battlefield."
Having said this,
Pārtha-Arjuna turned
again to finest-
of dharma-knowers Yudhiṣṭhira.

40 "Today I will make
the charioteer's mother
son-less, or Kuntī
my mother will find
herself son-less.
In truth I promise this:
I will not take off
my armour till
I have killed Karṇa."

41 Saying this to finest-of-
dharma-knowers Yudhiṣṭhira,
Pārtha-Arjuna
laid down his weapons
and his Gāṇḍīva bow
on the ground
and quickly slipped
his sword back
into its scabbard

42 And, lowering his head
in shame, diadem-
decorated Kirīṭin-
Arjuna did *añjali*
before Yudhiṣṭhira, saying:
"O rājā, be happy.
Forgive me. In due time,
all will become clear.
Namaste."

43 This was the way
valiant Arjuna pleased
foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira.
He stoood there silent
for some time; then:
"We cannot delay.
It must be done now.
I see Karṇa advancing.
I must confront him.

44 O rājā! I must go
and help Bhīma
on the battlefield.
I will use
any means to kill
the charioteer's son.
Know this: I live
only to please you.
This is the truth."

45 Radiantly energetic
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
said this, and touched
the feet of Yudhiṣṭhira,
and stood up. Pāṇḍu's son
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the bitter words
of Phālguna-Arjuna,

46 Rose from his bed and,
with pain in his heart,
said to Pārtha-Arjuna:
"O Pārtha-Arjuna!
It must be
that what I did
was not right – or why
should such fearful things
happen to you?

47 Behead me!
Cut off my head!
I am guilty
of bringing doom on the family!
I am obsessed!
I am a victim of addiction!
A slave to folly!
A lazy good-for-nothing!
A coward!

48 I don't even respect
respect-worthy elders.
Since I am all this,
Why do you
have to put up with me?
Criminal that I am,
I will retire to the forest
and spend my life there.
Be happy –
stay away from me.

49 It is mahātmā Bhīma
who deserves to be the rājā.
What is the point
in having a euruch like me
as head of a kingdom?
It is too much –
I haven't the strength any more
to bear the harsh words
you have heaped on me.

50 Let Bhīma be the rājā.
No use living
after being insulted
the way I have been insulted."
Saying this,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
quickly rose from his bed,
stood up,
and prepared to leave.

51 He repeated his desire
to retire to the forest.
Praṇāma-ing him,
Vāsudeva-Krishna said:

52 "O rājā! You know what
truthful-vowed Gāṇḍīva-wielding
Arjuna has said about his bow.
It is a famous promise.

53 'Whoever tells me to hand
the Gāṇḍīva to another
will die at my hands.'
That is exactly what you did.

54 So, O rājā, I advised Pārtha-Arjuna
to speak insultingly to you.
He did it
because he had to keep his vow,

55 Because it is said
that insulting a guru,
an elder, a superior,
is like killing him.
O mahā-muscled one!
What I and Arjuna

56 Did, this trick for the sake
of keeping the truth,
be so good as to forgive,
O rājā! Mahārāja,
both of us place ourselves
at your mercy.

57 Forgive us, O rājā.
We earnestly beseech
this favour from you.
Today the earth
will drink the blood
of wicked Karṇa.

58 Truly do I promise you,
believe me,
the charioteer's son
will die today.
You wanted him dead.
His life is over."

59 No sooner had he heard
these words of Krishna
than Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
stooped and raised
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
from his *praṇāma*-prostration,

60 And folding both palms in *añjali*,
he said:
"O Govinda-Krishna,
you are right.
I overstepped the limits
of propriety.

61 O Mādhava-Krishna!
I am grateful to you
for saving me
from drowning
in an ocean of calamity.
All of us,
Acyuta-Krishna,
have been rescued by you.

62 Both of us today have been plucked
out of a whirlpool
in which we fell,
blinded by ignorance.

63 You are the one
who has ferried us to safety
in the boat of wisdom,
along with our advisers.
O remover of sorrow and pain,
you are our lord."

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 Listening to these pleasing words
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
(continued Sañjaya)
the pride-of-the-Yādavas
Dharmātmā Govinda-Krishna
turned to Pārtha-Arjuna.

2 Because he had spoken bitterly
to Yudhiṣṭhira at Krishna's urging,
Pārtha-Arjuna
was profoundly depressed.

3 Seeing him in that state,
Vāsudeva-Krishna smiled
and said to Pāṇḍava Arjuna:
"Such sadness! – because
Pārtha-Arjuna said 'you' not 'thou'!
Suppose Dharma's son

4 Yudhiṣṭhira, who is rooted
in dharma,
had been slain by you
with your uplifted sword,
tell me, what would have been
your state then?

5 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
After killing the king,
what would you have done?
Dharma is a real problem,
specially for those
who cannot think clearly.

6 Acting from unclear dharma
and taking the life
of your eldest brother
would surely
have taken you
into the worst possible hell.

7 So my advice is:
Go now to the rich-in-dharma
and finest-of-dharma-knowers
and finest-of-Kauravas
Yudhiṣṭhira,
and obtain his favour.

8 Solicit his favour.
Appease rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
with your bhakti.
Then will we go
and attack
the charioteer's son.

9 O respect-worthy one!
When your sharp arrows
have killed Karṇa
on the battlefield,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
will be overjoyed.

10 Under the circumstances,
O mahā-muscled one,
it seems to me that this
is the best course for you.
This is the way for you
to achieve your ends."

11 Mahārāja!
Arjuna, ashamed,
fell at the feet
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and lay there
with lowered head,

12 And said to the finest
of the Bharatas repeatedly:
"I wish to please you.
O rājā! Forgive me
the words I said
with my poor understanding of dharma."

13 O best of all the Bharatas!
Seeing the exterminator of enemies
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in tears
falling at his feet,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

14 Rājā Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
stooped and gently raised
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and embraced his brother.
Then the earth-lord Yudhiṣṭhira
burst into tears.

15 They stood there,
the two mahā-radiant brothers,
for a long time, mahārāja,
weeping freely;
the tears washed their hearts
and purified their minds.

16 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
smiling, again and again
lovingly smelt the head
of his brother;

17 Then Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
said to the brilliant bowman
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna:
"O mahā-muscled one!
In front of all the warriors
on the field, Karṇa,

18 Despite all my efforts
to defend myself,
destroyed,
O mahā-bowman Arjuna,
my armour, war-flag,
bow, *śakti*-spear,
my horses
and my arrows.

19 O Phālguna-Arjuna!
When I recall
all that happened,
I get so depressed!
I get no pleasure
in living any more!

20 If you don't kill
that hero today
on the battlefield,
I'll give up my life.
No point living
after that."

21 O bull-brave Bharata!
When he heard this,
Vijaya-Arjuna replied:
"O rājā! Lord-of-earth!
Finest of men! Bless me.
I swear, by Bhīma, by the twins,

22 I touch my weapon here
and I swear –
either I kill Karṇa today
or I die
and you see my body
lying on the battlefield."

23 Saying this to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna turned
to Mādhava-Krishna:
"You can be sure, Krishna,
I will kill Karṇa
in battle today.

24 *Bhadraṁ te!* May you prosper!
Your intelligent advice
has made possible the death
of ill-ātmaned Karṇa."
O finest of rājās!
Keśava-Krishna said to Pārtha-Arjuna:

25 "O finest of the Bharatas!
May you succeed
in killing mahā-powerful Karṇa.
That is exactly
what I have always wanted,
O mahā-chariot-hero,

26 O finest of men,
that Karṇa's death
should be at your hands."
Then, turning
to Dharma-nandana Yudhiṣṭhira,
Mādhava-Krishna said:

27 "Yudhiṣṭhira, console and inspire
dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna,
and order him
to go and kill
ill-ātmaned Karṇa.

28 Son of Pāṇḍu!
As soon as we heard
how Karṇa's arrows compelled
you to retreat,
we rushed here
to be with you.

29 O defectless rājā!
Good fortune indeed
you were neither captured nor killed.
Now bless dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
and inspire him to victory."

30 "Come, Pārtha," said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Come, Bībhatsu,
come, embrace me, Pāṇḍu's son.
What you spoke,
you spoke for my good.
I forgive you.

31 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
You have my permission:
go and kill Karṇa.
O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Do not mind the harsh words
I heaped on you."

32 O respect-worthy rājā!
(continued Sañjaya)
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna lowered his head,
praṇāma-ed and with both hands
touched the feet
of his eldest brother.

33 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
raised repentant Arjuna
and embraced him.
Then, smelling
the crown of his head,
he repeated:

34 "O mahā-muscled one!
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
You have honoured me.
May your glory grow,
may you achieve a
time-transcending victory!"

35 "That evil-deed-doer,"
said Arjuna,
"that proud-of-his-glory
son of Rādha –
I will kill him today,
with all his followers.

36 That Karṇa who,
with bow drawn fully taut,
terrorised you with his arrows –
that Karṇa
today will reap the fruits
of his karma.

37 O lord of the earth!
I will see you again
only after killing Karṇa,
when I bring you
the good news.
In all truth, I promise this.

38 O lord of the world! Today,
I will return only after killing him.
I speak the truth.
And I touch your feet."

39 Pleased with the words
of diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna
(continued Sañjaya),
Yudhiṣṭhira pronounced gravely:
"O hero!
Unfading glory, full life,
wishes granted, victory over foes –
may these always be yours.

40 Go! May the gods
grant you success.
May you achieve
all that I want you
to achieve.
Go and kill Karṇa
on the field of battle,
as Puraṁdara-Indra
killed the anti-god Vṛtra."

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 Pleasing Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Sañjaya),
Pārtha-Arjuna, ready to kill the charioteer's son,
said happily to Govinda-Krishna:

2 "Ready my chariot!
Yoke to it the finest horses.
Equip the mahā-chariot
with the finest weapons.

3 Equestrian experts have trained
and groomed the horses.
Let them now come
with all their versatile equipment.

4 O Govinda-Krishna!
Let us now proceed swiftly
and kill the charioteer's son."
Mahārāja!
Hearing mahā-ātmaned Phālguna-Arjuna
say this,

5 Krishna turned to Dāruka
and said:
"Listen to the finest of bow-experts,
the finest of the Bharatas,
and do exactly
as he orders."

6 O finest of rājās!
Ordered by Krishna,
Dāruka readied
the foe-frightening chariot,
and covered it
with tiger-skin rugs.

7 He went to mahā-ātmaned
Pāṇḍava Arjuna and said,
"It is ready."
Arjuna inspected
the yoked chariot
driven by mahā-ātmaned Dāruka;

8 Then, with the permission
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and the *svasti*-blessings
of the Brahmins,
he climbed into the supremely
auspicious vehicle.

9 With the blessings
of mahā-wise Dharmarāja
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Arjuna prepared
to attack the chariot
of Karṇa.

10 O descendant of Bharata!
Seeing mahā-bowman
Arjuna march
against Karṇa,
all creatures presumed Karṇa
as already dead.

11 O rājā! A complete calm
descended on the field.
O lord of men!
Blue jays,
śatapatra-woodpeckers
and *krauñca*-cranes,

12 Keeping Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
on their right in *pradakṣina*,
kept pace with him.
O rājā,
many beautiful,
auspicious male birds

13 Chirped encouragement
to Arjuna
to do battle.
O lord of the earth!
kaṅkas, vultures, cranes,
hawks and crows

14 Flew ahead,
anticipating a gory feast.
These omens
and many other
auspicious signs
prepared Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna

15 For the death of Karṇa
and the extermination
of his enemies. On the way,
Partha-Arjuna
suddenly began
to sweat profusely,

16 And he began to wonder,
"How will it all
end today?"
Then Madhusūdana-Krishna said
to the wielder-
of the Gāṇḍīva-bow,

17 Pārtha-Arjuna,
lost deep in thought:
"O wielder of the Gāṇḍīva!
All those
who have been routed
by your Gāṇḍīva in battle –

18 No one else
can defeat them
as you have done.
I have seen heroes,
many of them,
as valiant as Śakra-Indra himself,

19 Packed off
to the final goal of man
after facing you in battle.
O respect-worthy one!
Droṇa and Bhīṣma
and Bhagadatta,

20 Avanti's princes Vinda and Anuvinda,
Kāmboja's Sudakṣiṇa,
mahā-valiant Śrutāyu,
and Acyutāyu –
who can face these heroes except you,
O lordly one?

21 You have celestial weapons,
you are dexterous,
you are strong,
you are not muddle-headed
in combat, you know everything
about warfare,

22 You know where to aim
and how to hit a target.
Arjuna, you can rout the gods
and gandharvas
and all the moving and unmoving life
on earth.

23 Pārtha-Arjuna,
no warrior is your equal.
Among the gods
and among the bow-expert
and difficult-to-defeat-in-war
Kṣatriyas,

24 I have not heard of
or seen your equal.
Your mahā-Gāṇḍīva-bow
is the creation
of Brahmā himself,
lord of all creatures.

25 O Pārtha-Arjuna,
because you wield this bow,
no one can defeat you.
Son of Pāṇḍu!
Let me say something
for your good.

26 O mahā-muscled one!
Don't take Karṇa for granted
on the battlefield.
He is strong, self-confident,
a weapons-expert
mahā-chariot-hero;

27 He is a wonderfully
versatile warrior
who knows where and when to fight.
No point, O Pāṇḍava,
talking too much.
Briefly, then –

28 In my opinion,
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa
is your equal,
possibly even your superior.
Be very careful how you attack him
in this mahā-battle.

29 He is radiant like Agni,
swift like Vāyu,
wrathful like Antaka-Yama
the god of death,
and physically
as strong as a lion.

30 He is eight *ratnis*,
one hundred and sixty eight
finger-lengths tall,
long-armed, broad-chested,
handsome, proud, finest of heroes,
very difficult to defeat.

31 He has all the guṇas
of a warrior,
he removes the fears
of his friends,
he hates the Pāṇḍavas
and favours Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

32 I think even Vāsava-Indra
and the hosts of gods
cannot kill Rādhā's son;
only you can.
So, go, and kill
the charioteer's son.

33 Even if the gods decide
to become flesh-and-blood creatures
in order to kill
the chariot-hero Karṇa
and win the war,
they will not succeed.

34 So kill this wicked-ātmaned,
crime-bent, heartless,
evil-minded hater of the Pāṇḍavas,
a hatred not motivated by self-interest.
Kill him –
and rest content.

35 This finest-of-chariot-heroes
son of a charioteer
thinks he is beyond
the clutches of Kāla.
Send him to Kāla today.
Make Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira happy.

36 I know well your valour,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
which even the gods and antigods
cannot match.
Proud, wicked-ātmaned Karṇa
despises the Pāṇḍavas.

37 O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Vile Suyodhana-Duryodhana
thinks no end of himself
because of Karṇa.
Uproot that charioteer's son –
and you destroy Duryodhana.

38 This Karṇa is a tiger.
His sword is his tongue.
His bow is his mouth.
His arrows are his teeth.
He is swift, proud, ruthless.
Kill him.

39 Kill this brave Karṇa
with your valour and power
like a lion
killing an elephant.
Kill him in battle.
You have my permission.

40 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
depends on him
and his prowess.
Kill Vaikartana-Karṇa today
on the battlefield."

SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 O Bharata descendant!
As Arjuna readied himself to kill Karṇa,
infinite-ātmaned Keśava-Krishna
said to him.

2 "O descendant of Bharata!
For seventeen days
it has continued –
this massive massacre
of men and elephants
and horses.

3 O lord of the earth!
Countless were your warriors
and those of your enemies
when you began fighting;
now you do not have
all that many.

4 Countless the elephant and horses
of the Kauravas,
O Pārtha-Arjuna –
but most of them killed
because they clashed
with a warrior of your calibre.

5 Because you are indomitable,
so difficult to defeat,
the ranks of the Sṛñjayas
and Pāṇḍavas
were able to hold their own
on the battlefield.

6 Protected by you,
the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas,
Matsyas, Karūṣas
and Cedis
were able to rout
the enemy forces.

7 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Who but the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes,
under your leadership,
could have pulverised
the Kauravas?

8 Why just the Kauravas?
You can scatter
the entire conglomeration
of gods, antigods and humans
if they decided
to march against you.

9 O tiger-among-men!
A king as valiant
as Vāsava-Indra would fail
to defeat a rājā
like Bhagadatta.
But you succeeded.

10 Defectless Pārtha-Arjuna!
No king
can even dare to face
this gigantic army
which you have chosen
to lead and protect.

11 Because you assisted them,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna succeeded
in killing Droṇa,
and Śikhaṇḍin was able
to kill Bhīṣma.

12 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Who else could have
got rid of those two
Śakra-Indra-equalling
Bharata mahā-chariot-heroes –
Bhīṣma and Droṇa?

13 Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma,
Droṇa, Vaikartana-Karṇa,
Kṛpa, Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman,
Somadatta's son Bhūriśravas,
and Kṛtavarman;

14 The Sindhu ruler Jayadratha,
the Madrarājā Śalya,
rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana–
these valiant,
never-retreating-in-battle
experts in war-weapons,

15 These commanders of *akṣauhiṇis,*
all united,
difficult to defeat in battle –
who in the world but you
could have succeeded
in vanquishing them?

16 Impetuous and courageous Kṣatriyas
from many countries,
their horses,
chariots and elephants,
you have systematically destroyed,
one by one.

17 O descendant of Bharata!
The Govāsas, Dāsanīyas,
Vasātis, the Easterners,
the Bāṭadhānas,
the self-important heroes
of the Bhoja kingdom,

18 The entire Kṣatriya-battle-force
teeming with excellent horses
and elephants,
O Bharata descendant,
have been exterminated
by you and Bhīma.

19 The perpetrators of fearful deeds –
the Tuṣāras,
the Yavanas and Khaśas,
the Dārvābhisāras,
the Daradas, Śakas
and Māṭharas, –

20 The Āndhrakas, Pulindas
and Kirātas
of stupendous prowess,
the Mlecchas,
Parvatīyas, and dwellers
on coastal areas –

21 All brilliant in battle,
brimming with war-frenzy,
powerful,
brandishing their maces,
are gathered to fight
for Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

22 Radiant one! Foe-scorcher!
Who but you
can defeat them in battle?
Seeing the ocean-surging
mahā-battle-force
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,

23 Who would have the courage
to attack it
without your help?
That ocean-surging army,
that dust-
shrouded army

24 Was scattered by the furious
Pāṇḍava offensive
only with your help.
The mahā-powerful king
Jayatsena,
ruler of Magadha,

25 Was slain in battle
by Abhimanyu
just seven days ago.
Ten thousand
of that rājā's elephants,
by gory-deed-doer

26 Bhīma were massacred
with his mace,
though they completely
encircled him.
Horses and hundreds of chariots
were destroyed by him.

27 Pārtha-Arjuna!
Son of Pāṇḍu!
And so it happened
in that mahā-fearful war,
you and Bhīma
despatched the Kaurava

28 Horses, chariots and elephants
to the realm of death.
When the front ranks
of the Kaurava army
fell, then,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,

29 O respect-worthy one,
Bhīṣma let loose
a fearsome net of arrows.
The Cedies, Kāśīs,
Pāñcālas, Karūṣas,
Matsyas and Kekayas

30 Were the targets of his arrows,
and he killed
every single one of them,
The shafts
sped from his bow
and shredded them.

31 The entire sky was obscured
by swarms upon swarms
of gold-feathered arrows.
Shooting fistfuls of shafts,
he killed
hundreds of charioteers

32 And lakhs of mahā-powerful
foot-soldiers,
as well as elephants.
Discarding
the nine irregular arrow-shots,
he chose the tenth,

33 And accurately slaughtered
horses and elephants
and chariot-ranks.
Continuing the massacre
for ten full days,
Bhīṣma

34 Made vacant the seats
of many chariots
and slew countless horses
and elephants.
He was like Rudra-Śiva,
like Upendra-Viṣṇu,

35 As he spread terror
in the Pāṇḍava ranks.
By slaughtering
the lords-of-the-earth
Cedis and Pāñcālas
and Kekayas,

36 And reducing to ashes
the Pāṇḍava horses,
chariots and elephants,
he plucked to safety
the drowning-in-misery
foolish Suyodhana-Duryodhana.

37 As he manoeuvred
through the battlefield,
blazing like Bhāskara the sun,
hundreds of crores
of foot-soldiers,
brandishing their weapons,

38 Sṛñjayas, and other lords
of the earth,
were blinded by his brilliance.
Zigzagging his way,
inspired by hopes
of victory,

39 He faced the Pāṇḍava soldiers
desperately trying
to block his advance.
Crushing the efforts
of the Pāṇḍavas
and the Sṛñjayas,

40 Bhīṣma singlehanded
showed unparalleled heroism
on the field.
Protected by you,
Śikhaṇḍin attacked
mahā-vowed

41 Tiger-among-men Bhīṣma
with knotted arrows
and killed him,
and there he lies, the Pitāmaha,
on his bed
of arrows,

42 Because he faced
a tiger-among-men adversary like you;
like Vṛtra laid low
by Vāsava-Indra.
Killing his enemies over five days,
impassioned Droṇa

43 Devised an impenetrable
battle-formation
to kill mahā-chariot-heroes
and also to protect Jayadratha
against attack.
The mahā-chariot-hero

44 Droṇa, during that night-long battle,
was like
implacable Antaka-Yama,
devouring all creatures.
Consuming warriors with arrows,
Bharadvāja's illustrious son

45 Droṇa was sent
to the final resting place
by Dhṛṣṭadyumna.
Because you contained
the charioteer's son Karṇa
and other chariot-heroes,

46 It was possible for us
to eliminate Droṇa.
You were able
to keep at bay
the entire army
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana,

47 And that, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
enabled Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna
to kill Droṇa.
Which Ksatriya warrior
could ever do
on the battlefield

48 What you did, Pārtha-Arjuna,
in your clash
with Jayadratha?
You repulsed a huge army
and slaughtered
many earth-lords

49 With your effulgent valour
and then slew
the Sindhu rājā Jayadratha.
All the earth-lords
think the Sindhu rājā's slaying
as very strange,

50 But you don't find it strange,
Pārtha-Arjuna,
because you are
an ideal mahā-chariot-hero.
O Bharata descendant,
if all Kṣatriyas were killed in one day

51 By you, I would think it
as perfectly normal.
That at least is my opinion.
O Pārtha-Arjuna!
Consider all the fierce warriors
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's army

52 As dead – now that Bhīṣma
and Droṇa
have been killed.
Dead are their finest warriors;
dead their horses, elephants
and chariot-heroes.

53 The army of the Bharatas
is like a sun-less
and moon-less and star-less sky.
O awesomely valiant
Parthā-Arjuna!
The rout of this army

54 Is like the rout of the antigods
long ago
by the prowess of Śakra-Indra
Only five
mahā-chariot-heroes
have escaped slaughter:

55 Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman,
Karṇa, the Madra ruler Śalya,
and Kṛpa.
O tiger-among-men!
Kill today all these five
mahā-chariot-ḥeroes,

56 Rid the earth of foes,
and bestow this island-
and-town-filled kingdom
on rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
Sky, seas, the underworld,
mountains, mahā-forests –

57 Let Pṛthā-Kuntī's illimitably valiant
and radiant son Yudhiṣṭhira
reign again
on this fruitful earth.
Like Viṣṇu, after killing
the Daityas and Dānavas,

58 Giving the worlds to Śakra-Indra,
do as Hari-Viṣṇu did –
restore the kingdom
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
After you have killed your foes,
let the Pāñcālas rejoice,

59 As the gods rejoiced
after Viṣṇu
had killed the Danavas.
If you respect
finest-among-men
guru Droṇa,
for you have any compassion
of Aśvatthāman, his son,
if you have any feeling
for ācārya Kṛpa,

60 If you have any regard
for the respect-worthy relatives
on your mother
Kuntī's side
and so do not want
to attack Kṛtavarman
and send him
to the abode of Yama,

61 If, O lotus-eyed one,
out of pity,
you wish to spare
the life of Śalya,
the king of Madra,
your mother Mādrī's brother,

62 Fine, so be it –
but let that not
prevent you from killing,
O finest of men,
Karṇa, the evil-minded hero
who despises the Pāṇḍavas.

63 That will be your good deed.
Do not worry.
You have my permission
to go ahead.
No blame
will attach to you.

64 O defectless one!
The attempt to burn
your mother Kuntī
and her children at night,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana's conduct
at the dice-game–

65 The root cause
of it all
was wicked-ātmaned Karṇa.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
is convinced
Karṇa will protect him,

66 And so he dares
in his fury
to threaten even me.
O bestower of honour!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana
is absolutely convinced

67 That Karṇa will kill
all the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
in battle.
Kaunteya-Arjuna!
Because Karṇa protects him,
Duryodhana dares

68 To wage war against you,
though fully aware
how strong you are.
And Karṇa declares,
'All the sons
of Pṛthā-Kuntī,

69 And the mahā-chariot-hero
Dāśārha Vāsudeva-Krishna,
I will conquer!'
Encouraging in this way
the utterly wicked-minded
and wicked-ātmaned Duryodhana,

70 Karṇa roars his challenge
in the court.
O descendant of Bharata!
Kill him!
Duryodhana's evil behaviour
with all of you

71 Has been at the urging
of evil-minded
and wicked-ātmaned Karṇa.
Six cruel mahā-chariot-hero
sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
I saw

72 As they butchered
brave bull-eyed Abhimanyu,
son of Subhadrā.
Bull-brave Droṇa,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
and Kṛpa were assailed

73 By him. He toppled
the drivers of elephants,
he unchanoted
mahā-chariot-heroes,
unhorsed horse-riders,
unweaponed foot-soldiers.

74 That bull-shouldered
enhancer of Kaurava
and Vṛṣṇi glory
oppressed
the combined forces
of the mahā-chariot-heroes,

75 And despatched humans,
horses and elephants
to the realm of Yama.
The arrows
of Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu
scorched the enemy ranks.

76 In truth I swear to you,
O my *sakhā*,
my loved-and-loving friend,
O lordly one,
that my whole body burns
when I recall
that wicked-ātmaned Karṇa
was behind Abhimanyu's death.

77 So mangled was he by the arrows
of Subhadrā's son
that he did not have the energy
to face him on the field.

78 Covered with blood,
panting heavily, furious,
pierced with Abhimanyu's arrows,
Karṇa turned his back,
wanted to flee,
he lost the will to live.

79 He wandered in a daze
on the battlefield.
Then he stood still.
It was precisely then
that, inspired
by Droṇa's timely

80 But ruthless advice,
Karṇa sliced the bow
of Abhimanyu.
Seeing his bow shattered,
the five remaining
mahā-chariot-heroes

81 Mercilessly slew Abhimanyu
with a shower of arrows.
The slaughter
of that hero
pained the hearts
of everyone present,

82 Except wicked-ātmaned Karṇa
and Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
who laughed unproariously.
And of course, it was Karṇa
who in the sabhā
abused Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī

83 So vilely in the presence
of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas,
with these words:
'The Pāṇḍavas are finished,
O Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
sent to eternal hell.

84 O large-hipped lady!
O sweet-speaking beauty!
Take another husband.
You are now a slave
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Make yourself servicable

85 In the palace.
You have no husbands any more,
O lotus-eyed one.
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
the Pāṇḍavas no more
have power over you.

86 O lovely princess of Pāñcāla!
You are now a slave,
and a wife of slaves.
From today
Duryodhana alone
is the world's ruler.

87 All the other earth-lords
pay homage to him.
Gracious lady,
look!
See how the Pāṇḍavas
have been humbled

88 By the prowess of Duryodhana,
see how they stare
at each other!
They are hollow sesame seeds,
they have fallen
into hell,

89 They have become slaves
of the Kaurava rājā!'
These were the words
which the utterly
ill-minded, learned-only-
in-the-ways-of-adharma,

90 Despicable Karṇa
spoke in front of you,
O descendant of Bharata.
Today,
those vicious words –
with your gold-filigreed arrows,

91 Your stone-sharpened,
    your life-annihilating arrows,
reply to those words!
    And whatever other criminal acts
wicked-atmaned Karṇa
    has perpetrated –

92 Let your arrows reply to them
    by putting an end
to his life.
    Mangled
by the fierce arrows
    of the Gāṇḍīva bow,

93 Make wicked-ātmaned Karṇa
    recall the words
of Droṇa and Bhīṣma.
    Let your gold-filigreed,
dazzling-like-lightning
    nārāca-arrows

94 Slice through the armour
    of Karṇa
and drink his life-blood.
    Shot by you,
let the fierce mahā-arrow
    pierce the flesh

95 Of Karṇa with mahā-swift speed,
    and send him
to the abode of Yama.
    Let piteous cries
of 'Hai! Hai!' rise when,
    riddled with arrows,

96 Karṇa's body is seen toppling,
    by all the lords
of the earth.
    Fallen,
smeared with blood,
    the earth his bed –

Transcreated by P. Lal

97 Weaponless, pathetic Karṇa –
let his relatives and friends
see him, and weep.
Shredded by your *bhalla*-shaft,
let the banner,
the elephant-rope-symbolled mahā

98 War-flag of Karṇa,
son of Adhiratha,
shatter on the battlefield.
And see that Śalya,
his golden chariot smashed
and his horses
and charioteer killed
by hundreds
of your arrows –
see that he
abandons the chariot
and flees the battlefield.

99 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
If you were to kill
Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena
with your arrows
before Karṇa's very eyes,
and so fulfil your vow,

100 Wicked-ātmaned Karṇa,
seeing his beloved son
perish in front of his eyes,
will then, O honour-bestowing Arjuna,
recall the words
of Droṇa, Bhīṣma and Vidura.

101 O finest of the Bharatas!
When he sees
Adhiratha's son Karṇa killed by you,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
will despair
of life and kingdom both.

102 See in the distance
how the Pāñcāla forces,
assailed by the arrows of Karṇa,
are rushing nonetheless
to the aid
of the Pāṇḍava warriors.

103 The Pāñcālas, Draupadī's sons,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Śikhaṇḍin,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sons,
and Nakula's son
Śatānīka,

104 Nakula and Sahadeva,
Durmukha, Janamejaya,
Sudharman, Sātyaki –
all of them
have been held in check
by Karṇa.

105 O tormentor of foes!
Can you hear
the anguished groans
of the Pāñcālas
hounded by Karṇa
on the battlefield?

106 The Pāñcālas are not ones
to flee in fear
from the field.
They are mahā-bowmen
prepared to face death
in a mahā-battle.

107 They did not run away
even when
the Pāṇḍava ranks
faced devastation
from the arrow-volleys
of Bhīṣma.

108 So you cannot expect them
to flee
from the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa.
He who singly
was responsible for routing
all the Pāñcālas,

109 That hero who careened
like consuming Kāla
among the Pāñcāla chariot-heroes
who kept battling
for their Pāṇḍava friends,
O my good friend Arjuna,

110 That Droṇa,
the guru of all expert bowmen,
that difficult-to-defeat guru
whose face glowed
with weapons-expertise –
the Pāñcālas faced him bravely.

111 O crusher-of-foes Arjuna!
The Pāñcālas are always ready
to rout their enemies.
They will not flee in fear
from the son of Adhiratha,
Karṇa.

112 Like a fearsome fire
consuming swarms of insects,
Karṇa
with his arrows
consumes
the swiftly advancing Pāñcālas.

113 O finest of the Bharatas!
Look, the Pāñcālas
are panicking!
Karṇa and other warriors
have spread havoc among them!
They are trapped!

114 Karṇa is finishing off
one by one
all the Pāñcālas who,
risking their lives,
have faced their foes
to save their friends.

115 O descendant of Bharata!
The boat-less Pāñcāla bowmen
are drowning
in the Karṇa ocean!
Become their boat
and ferry them to safety.

116 The mahā-murdering missile
that Karṇa obtained
from the finest of ṛṣis,
Bhārgava Paraśurāma,
is incinerating
the entire army!

117 In his terribly terrifying
fearful form,
dazzling in the fire
of his own energy,
he is burning
the entire army!

118 And the arrows released
from Karṇa's bow
on the battlefield
hover like attacking
swarms of bees
on the warrior-ranks.

119 O descendant of Bharata!
All the Pāñcālas
who lack will-power
and self-control
are fleeing helter-skelter
from Karṇa.

120 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
And Bhīma too,
whose wrath is insatiable,
surrounded by Sṛñjaya warriors,
is oppressed
by Karṇa's arrows.

121 O descendant of Bharata!
To neglect disease
is to invite death.
To neglect Karṇa
is to bring doom
on the Pāñcālas and Sṛñjayas.

122 Of Yudhiṣṭhira's warriors,
I see only you
who has the power
to confront
Rādhā's son Karṇa
and return unscathed.

123 O bull-among-men!
Pārtha-Arjuna!
Kill Karṇa today
with your sharp arrows!
Fulfil your promise!
Regain your glory!

124 O finest of warriors!
I tell you this,
and I tell you this
in all truth –
you singly can defeat Karṇa
and the Kauravas.

125 O supreme-among-men
Pārtha-Arjuna!
Perform this mahā-feat
of killing
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,
and bask in glory!"

SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 O descendant of Bharata!
(continued Sañjaya)
Keśava-Krishna said this,
and immediately
dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
gave up grief
and regained hope.

2 Smoothing his bowstring
and stretching it taul,
he raised his Gāṇḍīva
to finish off Karṇa,
and said
to Keśava-Krishna:

3 "Govinda-Krishna!
You are my lord and master,
you will bring me victory.
You favour me. I am sure to win.

4 With you on my side,
Krishna,
I can destroy the three worlds
should they fight me.
Killing Karṇa in this mahā-battle
is nothing to me.

5 Janārdana-Krishna!
I can see Karṇa
doing as he likes
on the battlefield,
and the Pāñcāla warriors
panicking and fleeing.

6 I can very well see
the fiery Bhārgava-missile
released by Karṇa
shooting through the sky,
like the thunderbolt
of Śakra-Indra.

7 But today is the day
when I will kill Karṇa,
and this feat of mine
will be the talk
of this world
so long as this world lasts.

8 Today, Krishna,
is Karṇa's final day,
for today I will fire
the Vikarṇa-arrow
from my Gāṇḍīva bow
and finish him off.

9 And rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra today
will curse
whatever made him give
royal authority
to an undeserving person
like Duryodhana.

10 O Krishna, the person
who spurns the deserving
and exalts the unworthy –
such a king
exposes himself
to supreme suffering.

11 O mahā-muscled one!
Today Dhṛtarāṣṭra
will lose him kingdom,
his happiness,
his authority, his cities,
and his sons.

12 Janārdana-Krishna!
With Karṇa dead,
the grand Duryodhana
will be as devastated
as a man who cuts down
his own mango trees.

13 When he sees Karṇa's body
shredded today
by my arrows,
then Duryodhana will recall
the offer of reconciliation
you made to him.

14 Krishna, the truth is:
With Karna dead,
Duryodhana
will be so desolated
that he will desire
neither kingdom nor life.

15 Let Subala's gambler son
Śakuni today realise
my arrows are my wager,
my Gāṇḍīva the dice,
and my war-chariot
the maṇḍala gambling-board.

16 O Govinda-Krishna!
By killing Karṇa
with my sharp arrows today,
I will finally cure
the painful sleeplessness
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

17 By killing
the charioteer's son Karṇa,
I will have ensured
the happiness,
for ever,
of Kuntī's son, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

18 O Keśava-Krishna!
I will shoot
an unrepulsable arrow
today which,
without fail,
will exterminate Karṇa.

19 Wasn't it he,
the wicked-ātmaned creature,
who dared to vow:
'I will not wash my feet
till I have killed
Phālguna-Arjuna'?

20 O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
I will prove him
a liar today.
The knotted arrow
I shoot will hurl him
out of the chariot!

21 And the earth today
will drink the blood
of the charioteer's son
who boasted
he had no equal
on this earth.

22 In front of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
praised himself
and said,
'Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
you are husbandless.'

23 My sharp arrows today
will prove him a liar
as they speed
like venomous snakes
and angrily
drink his blood.

24 I am the arrow-expert.
The *nārāca*-arrows
that I fire today
from my Gāṇḍīva
will propel Karṇa
to his ultimate peace.

25 Today is the day
when Rādhā's son Karṇa
will repent the obscenities
he mouthed
at Pāñcālī-Draupadī
in the open sabhā.

26 And the Pāṇḍavas
who were like hollow sesame seeds then,
will,
with the death of Karṇa,
wicked-ātmaned Vaikartana-Karṇa,
become fertile seeds.

27 Boasting no end of himself,
Karṇa said
to the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra:
'I am the one
who will protect you
from Pāṇḍu's sons.'

28 My sharp arrows today
will prove him
a liar,
and justify
the victory
of Pāṇḍu's sons.

29 The man who declared,
'I will kill
the Pāṇḍavas and their sons' –
I will kill him today
in the presence
of the great bowmen.

30 On whose war-prowess
the mahā-minded, ill-thinking
and wicked-ātmaned
son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Duryodhana,
totally depends,

31 The Karṇa I will kill today,
and so please
my brother Yudhiṣṭhira.
With a multiplicity of weapons
will I terrorise
my enemies.

32 Pulling my bow-string ear-taut,
I will enhance the glory
of the realm of Yama
by populating it
with shattered chariots
and corpses of elephants.
Then, the mahā-powerful
and wild-war-waging

33 Karṇa, the fierce warrior,
I will slaughter
with my arrows. O Krishna!
With Karṇa dead,
all the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

34 Like deer from a lion,
will flee for their lives.
And rājā Duryodhana will wallow
in grief today

35 Along with his sons
and well-wishers
after I have killed Karṇa.
Seeing me kill Karṇa,
the revenge-obsessed son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duryodhana

36 Will realise that I am,
O Krishna,
the finest of the finest of bowmen.
With his sons and grandsons,
counsellors and followers,
helpless

37 And hopeless will I make
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra today.
Today,
Karṇa's corpse,
by *cakravākas*
and other flesh-eating birds,

38 Will be devoured –
all its mangled-by-my-arrows
bits and pieces.
O Keśava-Krishna! O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
Today, in battle,
Rādhā's son Karṇa

39 Will I decapitate
in front of all
the bowmen.
O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
with sharpt *vipāṭha*
and other razor-arrows

40 I will slice apart Karṇa,
the wicked-ātmaned son of Rādhā.
Today,
from all the travails
of his mahā-agony,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

41 The valiant hero,
from his mental torture,
will be forever freed.
O Keśava-Krishna!
By killing Rādhā's son Karṇa
and all his followers,

42 I will delight the heart
of Dharma's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
O Krishna! Today,
all the poor pitiful followers
of Karṇa –

43 I will consume them
with flaming
snake-venomed arrows.
I will today,
the gold-armoured
and gem-earringed

44 Earth-lords – I will today,
O Govinda-Krishna,
cover the earth with their corpses.
O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
All the enemies of Abhimanyu,
today

45 I will sever their heads
with my sharp arrows.
Today I will rid the earth
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
and gift it
to my brothers.

46 If I fail to do so,
O Keśava-Krishna,
then you will live in a world
without Arjuna.
Krishna!
The debts I owe to bowmen,

47 To my righteous wrath,
to the Kauravas,
to my arrows, to the Gāṇḍīva –
I will be freed from them today.
Freed today
from the thirteen-year-long agony

48 By killing Karṇa,
just as Maghavat-Indra
killed Sambara, O Krishna.
When Karṇa is killed
in battle today,
the mahā-chariot-hero Somakas,

49 Always eager to help
their friends and allies,
will be deeply satisfied.
O Mādhava-Krishna!
I cannot imagine the joy
of Śini's grandson Sātyaki

50 When he hears that Karṇa
is dead,
and I have won the battle.
I will kill Karṇa
and his mahā-chariot-hero son
Vṛṣasena

51 And gift joy to Bhīma,
Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Sātyaki.
O Mādhava-Krishna!
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin,
the Pāñcālas –

52 The debt I owe them
I will repay
by killing Karṇa in battle.
In the mahā-battle
let all see today
how impassioned Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

53 Fights the Kauravas
and kills
the charioteer's son.
Permit me
to sing my own praises
again before you.

54 There's none in the world
my equal
in bowcraft.
There is none
as valiant as I,
none as merciful
as I, and none
in the world
as wrathful as I.

55 With the bow in my hand
I outclass the gods
and the antigods too.
All the world's creatures
are never a match
for me.
In the strength of my arms
I am unparalleled.
Unrivalled in manliness.

56 Like a spark of fire
in the heat of summer
bursting into flame
and consuming a forest,
I singly with arrows
shot from the Gāṇḍīva
can reduce to ashes
all the Kauravas
and Bāhlīkas.

57 On one of my palms
are signs of arrows,
on the other the sign
of a full-stretched bow.
On the soles of my feet
a chariot and war-flag.
A warrior who goes
to the field with these signs
can never be beaten."

58 Having said these words,
the second-to-none hero,
foe-destroying Arjuna,
eyes blazing with anger,
advanced to the battlefield,
determined to rescue
his brother Bhīma
and sever the head
of Karṇa.

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 "*Tāta*! Dear Sañjaya!"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra said.
"A fierce battle was raging,
a mahā-fearful clash,
between the Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas
and my sons.
What happened when Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
arrived to fight Karṇa?"

2 Like masses of clouds
roaring at end of summer
(replied Sañjaya),
the two armies roared
on the battlefield.
War-flags fluttered.
Weapons were brandished.
Bheri-drums blared
incitement to battle.

3 Huge elephants like clouds
loaded with weapons;
trumpets and chariot-wheels
roaring like clouds;
golden war-weapons
dazzling like lightning
arrows, and swords
and *nārāca*-shafts pouring
like torrents of rain;

4 A tempestuous war
of rivers of blood
and flashing swords;
spelling the doom
of Kṣatriyas –
like calamitous
unseasonal rains
pouring death and destruction
on people everywhere.

5 Some chariot-heroes
collectively killed
a lone chariot-hero.
A single chariot-hero
fought another single;
and in some cases,
a single chariot-hero
battled with an entire
chariot-division.

6 Or a chariot-hero killed
the horses and charioteer
of another;
or a brave warrior
riding an elephant
chose horses and chariot-
heroes as targets
and drove them into
the clutches of death.

7 Pārtha-Arjuna targeted
chariots and charioteers,
horses and elephants,
all enemies everywhere,
horses and their riders,
and foot-soldiers also,
and his arrows ensured
that all were despatched
to the clutches of death.

8 Kṛpa and Śikhaṇḍin
battled each other;
and Duryodhana advanced
against Sātyaki;
Śrutaśravas fought
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman;
and Yudhāmanyu was pitted
against Citrasena,

9 And Uttamaujas
of the Sṛñjayas confronted
Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena.
Like a famished lion
pouncing on a bull,
Sahadeva rushed
in flaming fury
on the rājā of Gāndhāra,
Śakuni.

10 The young son
of Nakula, Śatānīka
pierced with his arrows
the young son
of Karṇa, Vṛṣasena,
who retaliated
with a shower of arrows
that grievously wounded
Draupadī's son Śatānīka.

11 The versatile warrior,
Mādrī's son Nakula,
a bull-brave chariot-hero,
attacked Kṛtavarman.
And Karṇa was the target
of the Pāñcāla ruler,
Draupadī's brother,
born-of-the-yajña
general Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

12 O Bharata descendant!
Duḥśāsana and all
the Kaurava warriors,
with the Saṁśaptakas,
advanced against Bhīma,
foremost of warriors
skilled in war-weapons,
displayer of valour,
irresistible hero.

13 Uttamaujas attacked
Karṇa's son Suṣeṇa
and in a flash
severed his head.
The chopped head
fell screaming
on the ground, and the sky
and earth reverberated
with the noise.

14 Grief at the sight
of the sliced head
convulsed Karṇa.
Then, selecting arrows
of exquisite sharpness,
he angrily attacked
and destroyed the chariot
of Uttamaujas, and
his war-flag and horses.

15 Uttamaujas retaliated
with sharp arrows
pinning down Karṇa.
Then, with a shining sword
he killed the horses
and chariot-wheel protectors
of Kṛpa; after which,
climbing into the chariot
of Śikhaṇḍin, he left.

16 Safe in his chariot,
Śikhaṇḍin refrained
from attacking
unchårioted Kṛpa.
Keeping Śikhaṇḍin at bay,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
rescued Kṛpa whose chariot
was stuck in the mud
like a bull in a swamp.

17 Like the flaming sun
on a summer noon,
Bhīma, the son
of the wind god Vāyu,
clad in gold armour,
with his sharp arrows
continued to oppress
your sons on the field
of battle.

SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
In the thick of battle
Bhīma, ringed with attacking
enemy warriors,
ordered his charioteer:
"Drive my chariot
to where Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
are stationed.

2 Urge them swiftly forward,
O charioteer!
I will send my foes
to the realm of Yama."
As ordered by Bhīma,
the charioteer
rushed the chariot
towards the army
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,

3 Exactly where Bhīma
desired to be driven.
That was when
the entire Kaurava force
of elephants, horses,
chariot-heroes
and foot-soldiers launched
a concerted attack
on Bhīma.

4 From all sides
they rained arrows
on the swift chariot
of Bhīma;
but mahā-ātmaned Bhīma
repulsed them all
with a multitude
of accurate
gold-feathered arrows.

5 Sliced by the gold-
feathered shafts of Bhīma,
in two or three fragments each,
they fell on the ground.
And then, O rājā,
Bhīma slaughtered
the elephants, horses,
chariots and foot-soldiers
of all those rājās.

6 O Indra-among-men!
The din as they thudded
on the earth was like
that of mountains split
by lightning. Wounded
and shredded by the arrows
of Bhīma, those
Indras-among-men
converged on Bhīma

7 Like so many featherless
birds of prey
swarming and settling
on a single tree.
When your army
decided to attack,
that was the time
Bhīma decided
to display his prowess,

8 Like Kāla the Spirit
of Cosmic Time
at the end of a yuga,
rod in hand, consuming
the universe.
None in your army
was able to prevent
Bhīma from continuing
his course of destruction,

9 Just as no creatures,
by turning their faces,
can prevent Kāla
from consuming them all.
O descendant of Bharata!
Reduced to panic
by mahā-ātmaned Bhīma,
the Kauravas scattered
in all directions.

10 Like a mahā-storm
scattering clouds –
that was how Bhīma
dispersed your army
in all directions,
Then the powerful
and percipient Bhīma
joyfully said
to his charioteer:

11 "Can you, O charioteer,
make out all those
flags and chariots
in the distance – are they
ours or the enemies'?
When I fight, I cannot
tell foe from friend.
I do not want my arrows
to land on my friends!

12 Viśoka, I am troubled
when I see enemies
all around me,
because rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
has left, wounded
by sharp arrows,
and diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
has not returned.

13 Troubled, O charioteer,
that Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
fled, leaving me
alone among my enemies.
Is he alive or dead?
I do not know.
No news either
of dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

14 But I will proceed
with my task of routing
my powerful enemies.
Once and forever
I will smash the roots
of their united might.
Having done so,
I will celebrate
the victory with you.

15 Go through the quivers
in the chariot carefully
and let me know
in detail the contents
of each quiver –
how many arrows
are there in each?
what kind of arrows?
I must know.

16 Tell me quickly, charioteer,
how many – a thousand,
a hundred, of what kind?"
Viśoka said: "O hero!
I will list everything
to your satisfaction.

17 Brandishing magnificent weapons,
they are all here,
surrounding you,
ready to fight their enemies –
the Kekayas and Kāmbojas
the Saurastras and Bāhlīkas
the Mleechas and Suhyas
the Parataṅgas and Bhadras
the Baṅgas and Magadhas
the Kulindas and Ānartas
the Āvartas
and the Pārvatīya hill-warriors."

18 Viśoka said: "O hero!
Of arrows, we have
sixty thousand *nārgaṇas*,
ten thousand each
of *bhallas* and razor-shafts,
two thousand *nārācas*,
and, O Pṛthā-Kuntī's son
we have three thousand
pradara-arrows.

19 O Pāṇḍava! More arrows
than a six-bullock cart
can carry! O learned one!
Use them all. You have also
maces and swords
and other excellent weapons,

20 *Prāsa*-darts, *mudgara*-mallets,
śakti-spears, and *tomara*-lances –
do not fear any shortage of them."

21 "Charioteer!" said Bhīma.
"Look at the battlefield.
See how the arrows
of Bhīma have shrouded
all those rulers!
The sun is blotted out,
and the field has become
the horrendous realm
of death itself.

22 O charioteer!
The whole world today,
from children to grown-ups,
will see how Bhīma
slaughters the Kauravas
on the field of battle,
all by himself,
or goes down fighting
his last battle.

23 Yes, they will perish –
all the Kauravas –
or young and old
will see me perish
on the field of battle.
Alone, yet
I will kill them all,
or, all together,
they will kill me.

24 May all the gods
who recommend good karma
bless this one single
deed of mine! And may
foe-destroying Arjuna
come here swiftly,
like Śakra-Indra
materialising
when invoked in prayer.

25 Viśoka! Look! Look!
How powerful I am!
I have terrified
and mutilated
and decimated my enemies!
See how the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
despite their might,
are fleeing from me!

26 O charioteer!
Look at the rout of the Bharatas!
Why are they fleeing?
It seems to me clear
that tiger-among-men
percipient ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
is shrouding his enemies
with showers of arrows.

27 Viśoka! Look at them,
fleeing helter-skelter –
war-flagged chariots,
elephants and horses
and foot-soldiers!
See how *śakti*-spearss
and arrows create havoc
in the ranks of chariots
and chariot-heroes!

28 They are gold-winged
and peacock-feathered –
the arrows of Dhanañjaya-
Arjuna! They fall
like a pestilence
on the Kaurava ranks,
and you can hear
the agonised groans
of the afflicted warriors.

29 As they flee, their chariots
run down horses
and elephants and foot-
soldiers, mangling them.
The ranks of the Kauravas
are fleeing like herds
of panicking elephants
trapped in the terror
of a forest-fire.

30 Cries of ‘Hai! Hai!’ everywhere,
O Viśoka. The traumatised elephants
are trumpeting in agonising fear.”

31 “O Bhīma,” said Viśoka,
“can you hear
the fearful twang of angry
Pṛthā-Arjuna’s Gāṇḍīva?
Or has the thunderous twang
deafened both your ears?

32 O Pāṇḍava Bhīma!
All your wishes
have been granted!
The ape-symbolled banner
can be seen fluttering
above the elephant ranks.
The Gāṇḍīva bowstring
is flashing like lightning
in masses of clouds.

33 The ape in the banner
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
surveys the battlefied
and strikes terror
in the teeming ranks
of the enemy.
I see him too
and I also
am numb with fear.

34 The radiant diadem
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
scintillates on the field.
The gem studded
in the centre
of Arjuna's diadem
dazzles like
Divākara
the day-making sun.

35 By his side you can see
his Devadatta conch,
the gift of the gods,
like a pure-white cloud,
with a sound like thunder,
And, holding the reins,
weaving through the ranks
of the enemy, you can see
Janārdana-Krishna,

36 And near Janārdana
you can see his *cakra*
resplendent like the sun,
whose hub is like lightning,
whose edge is sharp
like a razor – the *cakra*
that enhances the glory
of Keśava-Krishna, and earns
the reverence of the Yādavas.

37 See the mahā-elephants'
trunks chopped by
Arjuna's razor-arrows,
toppling like towering
deodar trees. And see
massive elephants and riders,
killed by diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna's arrows,
crashing like lightning-hit hills.

38 O Kaunteya-Bhīma!
See the moon-white
Pāñcajanya-conch
of Krishna, see
the Kaustubha-jewel
dazzling on his chest,
and the Vaijayanti
garland of victory
as well.

39 There can be no doubt
that finest of chariot-heroes
Arjuna is rushing here
to destroy his enemies.
He slices through the ranks
of his enemies
in his precious chariot,
white as a pure-white cloud,
with Krishna his charioteer.

40 See how your younger
brother Arjuna,
whose prowess equals
the prowess of the raja
of the immortals, Indra,
is crushing chariots, horses
and foot-soldiers like
Suparṇa-Garuḍa flattening
the trees of a forest.

41 See how the arrows
of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
have exterminated
four hundred chariot-heroes,
seven hundred elephants,
countless foot-soldiers
and horse-riders
and innumerable chariots.

42 Decimating the Kauravas,
powerful Arjuna
is advancing here
like a wonderful
shooting star.
Your wish is granted.
Your enemies are killed.
May your glory increase
forever and ever!"

43 "Viśoka," said Bhīma,
"you give me the news
of Arjuna's advance.
I am pleased, O charioteer.
I am pleased to gift you
fourteen large villages,
a hundred slave girls,
and twenty chariots
for this information."

SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 Raising his voice above the din
of chariots and lion-roars of warriors,
Arjuna said to Govinda-Krishna:
"Faster! Faster!"

2 Govinda-Krishna said to Arjuna
(continued Sañjaya):
"We will be there in no time,
where Bhīma is battling."

3 Like thunderbolt-wielding
Devendra-Indra
angrily smiting Jambha,
Jaya-Arjuna advanced
to the field of battle
eager for victory,
pulled by snow-and-conch-
white horses, caparisoned
with gold, pearls, and gems.

4 And the lion-like warriors
of the enemy army
in surging anger
made sky and earth echo
with whistling arrows,
clatter of chariot-wheels,
thundering hooves
as they advanced
to clash with Arjuna.

5 O deserver of honour!
And then it began,
that glorious battle
between Pārtha-Arjuna
and his enemies, destroying
body, life, and misdeed –
like the battle between
Viṣṇu and the antigods
for lordship of the three worlds.

6 With his razor-edged, *bhalla,*
and half-moon arrows,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
sliced and shredded
the weapons of his foes.
In addition,
so many heads,
so many arms,

7 So many umbrellas,
fly-whisks, war-flags,
horses, chariots,
foot-soldiers, elephants
became his targets
for destruction.
They littered the field
like so many trees
shattered by a storm.

8 So many mahā-elephants,
glorious with filigree
of goldwork caparisons,
refulgent with Vaijayanti
garlands of victory,
proud of their riders,
carrying clusters of
gold-feathered arrows, looked
like flaming hills.

9 Like Marutvān-Indra
in the past rushing
to exterminate Bala,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
advanced towards Karṇa,
slicing elephants
and horses and chariots
with arrows as fierce
as Vāsava-Indra's thunderbolt.

10 Like a makara-monster plunging in an ocean,
foe-crushing tiger-among-men
mahā-muscled Arjuna
plunged into your army.

11 O rājā! Seeing Arjuna advance,
the excited hosts of chariot-heroes,
foot-soldiers, elephants and
horses marched against the Pāṇḍava.

12 As that huge force
attacked Pārtha-Arjuna,
the cacophony that arose
was like
the roaring reverberation of waves
of an agitated ocean.

13 All those mahā-chariot-heroes,
discarding fear of life,
charged
like tigers
against tiger-among-men
Arjuna.

14 But like a storm
swiftly scattering clouds,
Arjuna shot swarms
of deluging arrows
and dispersed the ranks
of his adversaries.

15 Then the expert bowmen
united
with the chariot-heroes,
and pinned down Arjuna
with a volley
of sharp arrows.

16 *Śakti*-spears
tomara-lances
prāsa-barbed darts
kuṇapa-spears
kūṭa-concealed daggers
mudgara-mallets
śūla-lances
parigha-spiked iron clubs
bhindipāla-slicers
triśūla-tridents
paraśu-axes

17 *Karavāla*-scimitars
hemadaṇḍa-golden rods
ṛṣṭi-swords
musala-clubs
hala-ploughs –
with these and other weapons
they attacked Pārtha-Arjuna.

18 With volleys of arrows
Arjuna despatched
the attacking chariots,
elephants and horses
to the realm
of Yama.

19 Assailed by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
the mahā-chariot-heroes fled
in all directions.

20 Four hundred
of these mahā-chariot-heroes
continued fighting;
but Arjuna, one by one,
despatched them also
to Yama's realm.

21 Afflicted with volleys
of sharp arrows
of all kinds,
they fled from Arjuna
helter-skelter
in all directions.

22 The wails of mahā-agony
of fleeing warriors
were like the noises
of oceanic waves
upon waves slapping
against a mountain.

23 O respectworthy monarch!
Having
shattered the army with his arrows,
and made it flee,
Pārtha-Arjuna turned next
to Karṇa.

24 The cacophony that was created
by Arjuna's chariot
as he advanced
was like the sweeping rush
of Garuḍa's wings swooping
on a snake victim.

25 Mahā-powerful Bhīma heard
that noise
from a distance,
and he yearned
for a darshan
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

26 Mahārāja! Anticipating
the imminent arrival
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
Bhīma without fear of life
started slaughtering
your warriors.

27 Son of the wind-god Vāyu,
valiant wind-swift Bhīma
began a display
of prowess
by whirling on the field
like the wayward wind.

28 Mahārāja!
O Indra-among-rājās!
O lord of the earth!
Your army was like
a battered ship
on a stormy ocean.

29 With amazing dexterity,
shooting arrows
with awesome accuracy,
Bhīma ruthlessly
despatched your warriors
to the realm of Yama.

30 O Bharata descendant!
Like Kāla
the Spirit of Cosmic Time
at yuga-dissolution
that was how your warriors
saw Bhīma.

31 O descendant of Bharata!
Seeing his soldiers
decimated by the incredible prowess
of Bhīma,
rājā Duryodhana
said to them:

32 "Unite quickly
and wipe out Bhīma!
With him eliminated,
the Pāṇḍavas are mine."
Obeying the command
of your son,

33 Which was given,
O bull-brave Bharata,
to all the expert bowmen
and the generals
and others;
all brilliant warriors,

34 The leaders of your army
began shooting
volleys of arrow-showers
on Bhīma. O rājā!
Elephant-warriors and soldiers,
eager for victory,

35 O Indra-among-rājās,
surrounded Bhīma,
the wolf-waisted hero.
O rājā!
Encircled by all those heroes,
heroic

36 Finest-of-Bharatas Bhīma
dazzled
like the moon ringed with stars.
Like the lovely full moon
made lovelier
with its coronas, –

37 Such was the enchantment
of finest-of-men Bhīma.
Mahārāja!
He looked like Arjuna.
No difference between him
and Vijaya-Arjuna.

38 Eyes flaming with anger,
determined to kill
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
all those earth-lords
afflicted him
with showers of arrows.

39 Retaliating with curved
and knotted arrows,
Bhīma slipped
out of that mahā-manoeuvre
like a fish wriggling
out of a net.

40 O Bharata descendant!
Slaughtering ten thousand
never-retreating-in-battle
elephants,
two hundred thousand and twenty
foot-soldiers,

41 Five thousand horses,
a hundred chariot-heroes,
Bhīma made a river of blood
flow on the battlefield.

42 This river –
blood its water
chariots its eddies
elephants its crocodiles
men its fishes
horses its *nakrānta*-beasts
body hair its weeds

43 Severed arms its snakes . . .
Gems floated on it.
Sliced thighs its *grāha*-sharks
marrow its mud
and chopped heads
its boulders

44 Bows its reeds
arrows its seedlings
maces and *parigha*-iron clubs
its nāga-serpents
umbrellas and war-flags
its *haṁsa*-swans
head-gear its foam

45 Necklaces its lotuses
the dust of the earth
its rippling waves . . .
a river to challenge
the brave
a fearful river to cross
for the timid . . .

46 Carrying its cargo of corpses of warriors
to the realm of Yama.
In a flash tiger-among-men Bhīma
transformed the battlefield

47 Into Vaitaraṇī
the river of the lower regions –
a river which the virtuous
find easy to cross,
a fearful river to cross
for the timid.

48 Wherever he attacked,
the finest-of-chariot-heroes
Pāṇḍava Bhīma
he slaughtered
hundreds of thousands
of enemy soldiers.

49 Mahārāja!
Seeing the prowess of Bhīma
in battle,
Duryodhana turned
to Śakuni
and said:

50 "Maternal uncle!
Kill mahā-powerful Bhīma
on the battlefield.
With Bhīma dead,
the mahā-powerful Pāṇḍavas
are finished."

51 Mahārāja!
Surrounded by his brothers,
the valiant son of Subala,
Śakuni,
prepared to advance
for a mahā-battle.

52 Reaching the brave Bhīma
on the battlefield,
he swiftly checked
the progress of Bhīma
like the shore restraining
the *makara*-filled ocean.

53 O Indra-among-rājās!
Despite the fury
of Śakuni's offensive,
Bhīma stood firm.
Śakuni struck him
in the left side of his chest

54 With stone-sharpened,
gold-feathered
nārāca-arrows.
Slicing through the armour
of mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
the gory

55 *Kaṅka*- and peacock-feathered arrows,
O mahārāja,
lodged in his body.
Grievously wounded.
Bhīma,
with a gold filigreed arrow,

56 In a burst of anger,
attacked Subala's son Śakuni.
O Bharata descendant!
That fearsome arrow,
by that terror-of-his-foes
Śakuni,

57 Skilful-fingered Śakuni,
was splintered in mid-air
into seven fragments.
O lord of the earth, O rājā,
his arrow smashed,
infuriated Bhīma

58 Merely smiled,
and with a *bhalla*-arrow,
sliced the bow of Śakuni.
Flinging aside
his damaged bow,
valiant Saubla-Śakuni

59 Picked up another,
and quickly fired
sixteen *bhalla*-arrows.
Mahārāja!
Those curved and knotted
bhalla-arrows –

60 With two of them he killed
Bhīma's charioteer,
with seven he wounded Bhīma.
O lord of people!
With one the war-flag,
with two the umbrella,

61 Were destroyed
by Subala's son Śakuni,
with four the four horses.
Mahārāja!
This so incensed
praised-for-valour Bhīma

62 That he quickly hurled
a gold-plated
śakti-spear made of iron.
Hurled by Bhīma,
that weapon,
flickering like a snake's tongue,

63 Sped towards the chariot
of the mahā-ātmaned
son of Subala, Śakuni.
Catching in mid-air
that gold-plated
iron *śakti*-spear,

64 Śakuni frowned in anger,
O lord of the earth,
and hurled it back
at Bhīma.
Piercing the left arm
of the mahā-ātmaned Pāṇḍava,

65 It fell on the earth,
slithering
like a lightning-flash.
Mahārāja!
The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
kept screaming,

66 But their lion-like roars
did not deter
Bhīma.
Mahā-powerful Bhīma
picked up
another bow,

67 Strung it, and in a flash,
O Indra-among-rājās,
he shrouded Subala's son Śakuni
with arrows,
along with the other
desperately battling warriors.

68 O lord of the earth!
With amazing dexterity
he shot four arrows
killing enemy's his four horses,
and with a single *bhalla*-arrow
he shredded the war-flag.

69 Finest-of-men Śakuni
jumped out
of his horse-less chariot;
eyes flaming, panting heavily,
he stood firm,
and twanged his bow.

70 O rājā! He obscured Bhīma
with volleys of arrows
from all sides.
Bhīma, undaunted,
praised-for-valour Bhīma
retaliated

71 By neutralising his arrows,
angrily splintering his bow,
and wounding him
with sharp arrows.
Afflicted by powerful Bhīma,
foe-exterminating Śakuni

72 Toppled on the earth;
there were few signs of life
left in that ruler.
O lord of the earth!
Seeing him desolated,
your son Duryodhana

73 Rescued him in his chariot
and sped him away
under the very eyes of Bhīma,
who watched
from his chariot.
Faces averted, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons

74 Fled in fear in whichever direction
they found convenient.
Mahā-afraid were they.
O rājā!
With Śakuni
routed by expert bowman Bhīma,

75 Mahā-fear gripped
your son Duryodhana.
Determined to save the life
of his maternal uncle Śakuni,
he whipped the horses away
from the field.

76 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing rājā Duryodhana
forsake the field hastily,
all the warriors engaged
in face-to-face chariot-combat
fled.

77 Seeing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
panicking and fleeing,
Bhīma harassed them
by letting loose
a hundred-arrow volley
and chasing them.

78 O rājā!
Abandoning the battlefield
where Bhīma was battering them,
the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra went
to Karṇa.

79 O rājā! That was when
the super-mahā-powerful
mahā-valiant Karṇa
became an island
of safety and refuge
to the panicking Kauravas.

80 O tiger-among-men!
O bull-brave monarch!
Like shipwrecked sailors
seeking an island haven,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
found their haven in Karṇa.

81 O rājā!
Then, deciding that death
was their preferred goal
and ultimate end,
they advanced cheerfully
to the battlefield.

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 "Tell me, Sañjaya," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"what Duryodhana
and Saubala-Śakuni said
when Bhīma routed our army.

2 What did
finest-of-the-victorious Karṇa,
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Duḥśāsana and others
have to say?

3 The prowess of Pāṇḍava Bhīma
appears to me
to be utterly incredible.
How could he
singlehanded
battle my entire army?

4 Crusher-of-his-foes
Rādheya-Karṇa
was true to his word.
He was the one
who became the refuge
of the Kauravas,

5 He was their armour,
their promise,
Sañjaya, their life and hope.
Seeing our army
brutalised by the infinitely
energetic Pāṇḍava Bhīma,

6 The son of Adhiratha and Rādhā –
Karṇa –
what did he do?
What did my sons
and the difficult-to-defeat
mahā-chariot-hero rājās do?
Tell me all,
Sañjaya. You speak so well."

7 Mahārāja! (said Sañjaya)
Right in front of Bhīma,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
attacked the Somakas at noon.

8 And powerful Bhīma also
attacked the Kauravas.
Noticing this,
Karṇa ordered his charioteer Śalya
to advance
towards the Pāñcālas.

9 Seeing the Kaurava forces
harassed by the offensive
of percipient Bhīma,
Karṇa said
to his charioteer: "Swiftly!
Towards the Pāñcālas!"

10 The mahā-strong Madra-rājā Śalya
urged
the swift, pure-white horses
to the ranks
of the Cedis, the Pāñcālas
and the Karūṣas.

11 Penetrating the ranks
of that massive army,
foe-eliminating Śalya
cheerfully drove
the chariot exactly
where Karṇa wanted.

12 O lord of the earth!
The sight
of the tiger-skin-draped,
cloud-reverberating chariot
terrified
the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas.

13 On the field of battle
could be heard,
in that mahā-clash,
the mountain-splitting
and thunder-cloud-roaring
of that chariot.

14 Pulling his bowstring ear-taut,
Karṇa released
hundreds of sharp arrows
which penetrated
the Pāṇḍava ranks,
killing hundreds and thousands.

15 But even as Karṇa
was performing this feat,
many mahā-chariot-hero
Pāṇḍava bowmen
surrounded
the invincible son of a charioteer.

16 Śikhaṇḍin, Bhīma,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Nakula,
Sahadeva,
Draupadī's sons,
Sātyaki –

17 Eager to kill Rādhā's son,
all of them
attacked Karṇa.
At that time,
with twenty sharp arrows,
Sātyaki,

18 The finest of men,
pierced Karṇa
near his shoulder blade.
Śikhaṇḍin with twentyfive,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
with seven,

19 Draupadī's sons
with sixtyfour,
Sahadeva with seven,
and Nakula
with a hundred arrows
wounded Karṇa.

20 In a fit of rage,
mahā-powerful Bhīma
let loose a volley
of one hundred arrows
that grazed the neck
of Rādhā's son

21 The son of Adhiratha smiled;
super-mahā-powerful Karṇa
twanged
his magnificent bow
and afflicted all of them
with volleys of arrows.

22 O bull-brave Bharata!
Rādhā's son wounded them
with five arrows each.
Then, slicing the bow
and shredding the flag
of Sātyaki,

23 He shot nine arrows
that struck
the chest of Sātyaki.
O respectworthy monarch!
Infuriated, he shot thirty arrows
at Bhīma.

24 Then, O tormentor of foes,
with one *bhalla*-arrow
he shredded Sahadeva's flag,
and with three more
he killed the charioteer
of Sahadeva.

25 O bull-brave Bharata!
In no time at all,
he unchariotted
the five sons
of Draupadī –
an incredible feat!

26 With curved and knotted arrows,
he spread havoc
among all the warriors,
and started attacking
the Pāñcāla and Cedi
mahā-chariot-heroes.

27 O lord of the earth!
Despite their predicament,
the Cedi and Matsya heroes
mounted an offensive
against Karṇa,
deluging him with arrows.

28 But the mahā-chariot-hero
son of a charioteer
kept them at bay
with his counter-arrows.
O lord of the earth!
The Cedis and Matsyas

29 Fled from the field
like a herd of deer
mauled by a lion.
O bull-brave Bharata!
I witnessed this marvel
with my own eyes.

30 All by himself,
the valiant charioteer's son,
with a splendid display
of his śakti,
took on all
the bow-expert warriors,

31 The enterprising Pāṇḍavas,
O mahārāja,
and blocked their advance.
O Bharata descendant!
Seeing the wonderful feat
of mahā-ātmaned Karṇa,

32 The gods, the Siddhas,
and the Cāraṇas
were delighted.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's bow-expert sons
paid pūjā-respect
to finest-among-men,

33 Finest-of-bowmen
and finest-of-chariot-heroes Karṇa.
Then, O mahārāja,
the ranks of the enemy
were consumed
by Karṇa

34 Like a summer fire
consuming sticks and dry grass.
Oppressed incessantly
on the battlefield
by Karṇa,
the Pāṇḍavas,

35 Afraid to face
that mahā-chariot-hero,
scattered in all directions.
In that mahā-clash,
the mahā-agonised cries
of the Pāñcālas rose

36 When the sharp arrows
shot by Karṇa
pierced them.
The Pāṇḍava mahā-army,
hearing those cries,
trembled in fear.

37 In fact, even his enemies
regarded Karṇa
as the sole supreme war-hero.
Rādhā's son Karṇa
once again displayed
a foe-crushing feat –

38 So incredible the Pāṇḍavas
did not dare
even to look at him.
Like a wall of water
shivering into rivulets
when striking a mountain,

39 The Pāṇḍava army dispersed
when facing
the might of Karṇa.
O rājā!
Blazing like a smokeless plume of fire,
Karṇa,

40 Mahā-muscled Karṇa,
consumed the mahā-army
of the Pāṇḍavas.
Mahārāja! With his arrows,
Karṇa sliced
the ear-ringed heads

41 And the arms of the brave warriors
opposing him.
He did this swiftly.
Ivory-handled swords,
war-flags, *śakti*-spears,
elephants, horses,

42 Chariots of all kinds,
and, O rājā,
pennants, axles,
yokes, joints,
various makes
of chariot-wheels, –

43 All these
warrior-vowed Karṇa sliced
and destroyed.
O Bharata descendant!
Elephant-and-horse-corpses,
killed by Karṇa,

44 Piled in heaps, made difficult
walking on the field,
slippery with blood and marrow.
No ups and downs –
the ground was level
with butchered elephants and horses

45 And foot-soldiers and smashed chariots –
impossible to tell
where high where low.
Neither our warriors nor theirs
could make out
who was who and where

46 When the sky turned pitch dark
with the thick volleys
of Karṇa's arrows.
The gold-feathered shafts
that sped from the bow
of Rādhā's son Karṇa,

47 Mahārāja, completely obscured
the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes.
Again and again,
Rādhā's son Karṇa
prevented the Pāṇḍava

48 Mahā-chariot-heroes
from taking the initiative,
no matter how hard they tried.
Like an enraged lion
scattering a herd
of forest deer,

49 Super-mahā-illustrious Karṇa
scattered
the finest-of-chariot-heroes,
the Pāñcālas
and other enemy warriors
on the battlefield.

50 Like a wolf chasing
a flock of sheep,
Karṇa pursued the enemy.
Seeing the Pāṇḍavas fleeing,
the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra

51 All of them mahā-bowmen,
roaring with joy,
appeared on the scene.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Duryodhana was in a state
of absolute ecstasy.

52 He ordered
the military musicians
to strike up victory songs.
Then, the mahā-bowmen,
the finest-among-men,
the Pāñcālas

53 Decided to return,
even if it meant
facing death in battle.
On the battlefield,
tormentor-of-his-foes,
Rādhā's son Karṇa,

54 Bull-brave hero Karṇa,
repeatedly repulsed them,
O mahārāja.
O Bharata descendant!
By Karṇa,
twenty enemy chariot-heroes

55 And over a hundred Cedi warriors
were angrily
wiped out.
O Bharata descendant!
Emptying chariot-seats,
making horses riderless,

56 And elephants driver-less,
he terrified
the foot-soldiers
into a panicky retreat.
Foe-tormenting Karṇa blazed
like the noonday sun.

57 Impossible then even to look
at the charioteer's son,
incandescent like Kāla or Antaka!
Mahārāja!
Men and horses,
chariots and elephants

58 Were slaughtered by foe-crushing,
mahā-bowman Karṇa.
Like Kāla
the Spirit of Cosmic Time
consuming all creatures,
the mahā-powerful

59 Mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa
consumed the Somakas,
singly, and stood firm.
And we were witness
to the awe-inspiring spectacle
of the Pāñcālas

60 At the mercy of Karṇa,
but refusing
to leave the battlefield.
Rājā Duryodhana,
Duḥśāsana,
and Śaradvat's son Kṛpa,

61 Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman
and mahā-powerful Śakuni
were also involved
in the slaughter
of hundreds and thousands
of Pāṇḍava warriors.

62 O Indra-among-rājās!
The two truly valiant
sons of Karṇa
angrily roamed the field,
searching out and killing
Pāṇḍava fugitives.

63 What a cruel and killing war
it was!
The Pāṇḍava heroes
Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin,

64 And Draupadī's five sons
and others
angrily butchered
so many of your warriors.
And so many Pāṇḍava warriors
perished too,
and mahā-powerful Bhīma
terrorised your army.

SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 Mahārāja! Arjuna too
(continued Sañjaya),
seeing Karṇa, angrily began killing
the four-fold army ranks.

2 Blood the water on the field;
Mud the flesh, marrow and bones;
Sliced heads of warriors the boulders;
Elephants and horses the river-bed;

3 Everywhere
heaps of bones;
Cranes and vultures
screeching their cries;
Umbrellas like *haṁsa*-swans
and small boats;
Corpses of soldiers
floating like tree-trunks;

4 Lotus-clusters
the pearl necklaces,
Head-dresses
the foam and froth;
Bows and arrows
the fish;
Skull-fragments bobbing;

5 Armour and shields the eddies;
Chariots the rafts –
A river to thrill the victory-minded,
A river to terrorise the faint-hearted.

6 And the creator of this river,
the scourge of heroes,
dreadful-deed-doer,
the bull-brave warrior
Bībhatsu-Arjuna
said to Vāsudeva-Krishna:

7 "O Krishna!
I see the war-flag
of the charioteer's son Karṇa.
Bhīma and other heroes
are locked in battle
with that mahā-chariot-hero.

8 O Janārdana-Krishna!
O punisher-of-people Krishna!
The Pāñcālas are running away
from Karṇa!
And rājā Duryodhana,
beneath that white umbrella –

9 How splendid he looks,
standing near Karṇa,
watching the fleeing Pāñcālas!
Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman,
the mahā-chariot-hero son of Droṇa,
Aśvatthāman–

10 Reinforced
by the charioteer's son Karṇa,
these three are protecting
Rāja Duryodhana.
If we fail to kill them,
the Somakas are doomed.

11 O Krishna!
How wonderful he looks ! –
Śalya, the charioteer
of the charioteer's son,
seated below Karṇa,
urging the horses.

12 Drive my mahā-chariot
swiftly there.
I have made up my mind
what best to do.
I must kill Karṇa
in battle today –

13 For if I do not kill
the son of Rādhā,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
the Pāṇḍava and Sṛñjaya
mahā-chariot-heroes
will die before our very eyes!"

14 As requested,
mahā-muscled Keśava-Krishna
drove the chariot
through your army ranks
for the combat between Karṇa
and Savyāsacī-Arjuna.

15 Arjuna's request
and the speed with which
mahā-muscled Hari-Krishna
drove the chariot
cheered the spirits
of the Pāṇḍava warriors.

16 O respectworthy monarch!
The rattle
of the chariot-wheels
of Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
sounded like the thunderbolt
of Vāsava-Indra.

17 Filled with the energy
of supreme confidence,
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
drove through the ranks
of your army
creating havoc wherever he went.

18 Seeing the war-flag
    of white-horsed
and *Kṛṣṇā*-black-charioteered
    mahātmā Arjuna,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
    said to Karṇa:

19 "The one you asked about,
    Karṇa,
the white-horsed and black-charioteered
    destroyer-of-enemies in battle –
he is advancing
    towards us.

20 There he is – Kuntī's son
    holding the Gāṇḍīva.
If you can kill him
    in battle today,
nothing will benefit us
    more than that.

21 Listen to the twang
    of his Gāṇḍīva, Karṇa,
and see his moon-and-stars-
    symbolled pennants
with little *kiṅkiṇi*-bells
    flashing like lightning.

22 See the *vānara*-ape-man
    sitting atop
Pārtha-Arjuna's war-flag,
    surveying all
the Kaurava warriors
    and terrifying them.

23 And see the charioteer
    of Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna –
Prabhu Krishna himself,
    with his *cakra*,
mace and conch,
    and Śārṅga-bow

24 And the twang that you hear
is the sound
of Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva bow,
which releases arrows
that accurately destroy
enemies everywhere.

25 The large, pink-eyed
and moon-faced heads
on the battlefield
are of heroic rājās
decapitated;
they litter the field.

26 Sandalpaste-smeared
and thick as *parigha*-iron clubs
are the sliced upraised arms
of warriors
who fell on the battlefield
clutching their weapons.

27 Mutilated, the horses lie
on the field,
fallen with their riders,
tongues hanging out,
eyes gouged,
sleeping the sleep of death.

28 And the elephants from
the Himālayan territories,
hill-huge elephants,
have collapsed and fallen
like mountain peaks
on the battlefield.

29 And these are huge
Gandharva-city-size chariots,
from which lords-of-men fell,
like heaven-dwellers
falling from sky-chariots
after their good deeds are exhausted.

30 Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
is harassing his enemies
like a lone lion
terrorising
a herd of deer.

31 After wiping out
all the greal chariot-heroers,
he is advancing towards you.
Rādheya-Karṇa!
Prepare to face
this descendant of Bharata.

32 Discard pity and fear.
Recall Paraśurāma's weapon.
Remember his advice.
Clench your fist. Aim well.
Will victory and face the mahā-chariot-hero
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

33 Arjuna is very quick
at wiping out his foes,
which is why
the panic-stricken army
of Duryodhana
is fleeing from him.

34 The way his body is restless
with energy,
I am convinced
he is leaving the others
and hurrying straight
towards you.

35 Pārtha-Arjuna's anger
is fierce
because wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
is in trouble,
and so he is singling you
for attack today.

36 You grievously wounded
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
and unchārioted him.
Śikhaṇḍin,
Sātyaki,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

37 Draupadī's sons,
Yudhāmanyu, Uttamaujas,
and the twin brothers
Nakula and Sahadeva
have also suffered grievously
at your hands.

38 Foe-tormenting
Pārtha-Arjuna,
with anger-filled bloodshot eyes,
is leaving
all the other earth rulers
and heading towards you.

39 There is no doubt at all
you are the target,
not the rest of the army.
So, Karṇa, be prepared.
No bowman other than you
is a match for him.

40 There is none in the world,
no other bowman
who has the power,
the oceanic prowess
of Arjuna
when roused to anger

41 I can see no one
protecting him
on either side,
or at the back.
He is all alone.
Here is your chance!

42 You are the only one
who can face
this team of twin Krishnas
and emerge the victor.
Rādheya-Karṇa!
Prepare to kill Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

43 You are the only one
in htis maha-battle
equalling Bhīṣma, Droṇa,
Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
and Kṛpa;
so, stop Savyasācī-Arjuna now!

44 Kill Dhanañjaya-Arjuna now!
Karṇa,
he is like a snake
with a flickering tongue,
like a snorting bull,
like a wild tiger.

45 All the mahā-chariot-hero
rulers of the earth
supporting Duryodhana,
terrified of Arjuna,
are fleeing the field
in all directions.

46 O son of a charioteer!
There is not one
in our entire army
who can restore confidence
in these fear-stricken rulers.
Only you can.

47 O tiger among men!
You are the island refuge
of these Kauravas.
All of them are here
because they know
you are protecting them.

48 O Rādheya-Karṇa!
With the same fortitude and patience
you routed
the Videhas, Ambaṣṭhas,
Nugnajits and Gāndhāras –
summon that energy now
and defeat
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna.

49 O mahā-muscled one!
With your mahā-manliness
confront also Vārṣṇeya-Vasudeva-Krishna
who is so fond of Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

50 All alone you routed the rulers
in the *digvijaya*;
with Śakra-Indra's gifted missile
you killed Ghaṭotkaca;
use those powers now to kill
Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna."

51 "O mahā-muscled Śalya,"
said Karṇa,
"do not fear Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
It seems that finally
you have found yourself.
You agree with me.

52 Witness today the strength
of my two arms,
the skill of my training.
I will today singly
wipe out the Pāṇḍavas
in this mahā-war.

53 O tiger-among-men!
I give you
my word of truth today –
I will not return
from the field without killing
the two Krishnas.

54 Or I will sleep the sleep
that lasts forever.
One is never sure of victory
in chariot-combat.
Either I kill them both,
or die and gain fame."

55 "Even alone," replied Śalya,
"finest-of-chariot-heroes Arjuna
is famed as invincible.
With Krishna to support him,
who is there who will dare
to think of defeating him?"

56 "You are right," said Karṇa.
"There is no chariot-hero
the equivalent of Arjuna.
So witness my valour!
This is the man I will fight
in the mahā-clash today.

57 This finest of chariot-heroes,
this Kaurava prince
lords it on the field
in his white-horsed chariot.
He will try to get me
fatally trapped.
With Karṇa despatched,
he will quickly wipe out
all the Kauravas.

58 Indeed, this prince
is second to none.
His arms are marked
with scars of the bowstring.
They do not tire
nor sweat nor shake.
He is skilled and dexterous
in the use of arms.
His weapons are deadly.

59 He shoots simultaneously
any number of arrows,
kaṅka-feathered arrows.
How swiftly he shoots!
How swiftly he aims!
His resistless arrows
travel a distance
of a two-mile *krośa*.
There is none like him.

60 This is the Arjuna
who with Krishna his double
set fire to the Khāṇḍava
to gratify Agni
the deity of fire,
for which Agni
gifted Arjuna the Gāṇḍīva
and the *cakra*-discus
to mahātmā Krishna.

61 The mahā-muscled hero
was given by Agni
a thunderously rattling
white-horsed chariot;
the large-minded hero
was also recipient
of two divine quivers
and many other
celestial weapons.

62 And when he destroyed
in the realm of Indra
the Daitya anti-gods
known as Kālakeyas,
he obtained the conch
called Devadatta,
the gift of the gods.
There is no one like him
in the whole world.

63 After pleasing in battle
Mahādeva-Śiva,
this hero who possesses
mahā-experience
received the celestial
Pāśupata-weapon –
a mahā-missile
with the potential
to destroy the worlds.

64 From the Lokapāla
guardians of the worlds,
he obtained mahā-weapons
of incalculable destructiveness.
With these very weapons,
the lion-brave hero
succeeded in wiping out
all the anti-gods
called the Kālakeyas.

65 In the city of Virāṭa
where we had assembled,
he was the one,
alone in his chariot,
who routed us all
and looted our cattle,
after which he stripped
the mahā-chariot-heroes
of their dresses and uniforms.

66 O Śalya! This person,
the paragon of kings,
possessing all guṇas,
a second Krishna,
a hero whom none
in the world dares challenge –
this is my rival –
I know this well,
I know it very well.

67 And he is protected
by Keśava-Krishna
of infinite valour,
who is none other
than Nārāyaṇa himself,
whose virtues cannot
be exhausted though sung
by all the worlds
for ten thousand years –

68 The mahā-ātmaned one,
Vasudeva's son,
the victorious one,
the conch-and-*cakra*-
and-sword-carrying Viṣṇu!
I see both of them,
Krishna and Arjuna,
together in one chariot,
and I feel afraid.

69 No one is the equal
of Pārtha-Arjuna
in bow-craft,
and Nārāyaṇa-Krishna
is unexcelled in *cakra*.
It may be possible
to conquer the Himālayas,
but never Pāṇḍava Arjuna
and Vāsudeva-Krishna.

70 In valour and strength,
in physical fitness
and military tactics,
Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Phālguna-Arjuna
are unmatched. O Śalya!
There is none but me
who dares face these two
on the field of battle.

71 O lord of Madra!
What a clash it will be –
between the Pāṇḍava and me!
A heart-enthralling clash,
a clash to the end!
Unheard of before!
Weird and wonderful.
It will be swift,
it will be final.

72 I will kill them today,
this twin-Krishna team,
or they will kill me,
the two of them together."
In a voice that boomed
like a rumbling cloud,
these were the words
spoken to Śalya
by foe-crushing Karṇa.

73 That was when Duryodhana
approached and respectfully
greeted him. And Karṇa
then said to your son,
the finest of the Kauravas,
to strong-armed Kṛpa,
to Bhoja-Kṛtavarman,
to the rājā-of-Gāndhāra
Śakuni and his sons,

74 To the son of guru Droṇa
Aśvatthāman,
to his younger brother,
to the foot-soldiers
and elephant-warriors:
"Advance immediately
against Acyuta-Krishna
and Arjuna, surround them
and tire them out.

75 O lords of the earth!
Exhaust them, punish them!
Weaken them such that I
can easily and cheerfully
finish them off."
"So be it," they replied,
and advanced in a body
swiftly towards Arjuna,
determined to kill him.

76 Following Karṇa's orders,
those mahā-chariot-heroes
released volleys of arrows
at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Like a mahā-ocean
patiently absorbing
thousands of rushing
rivers and streams,
Arjuna welcomed them.

77 Such was his dexterity
you could not tell
when excellent arrows
were fitted, when fired.
All you could see
were heaps of corpses
of elephants and and horses
and men at the feet
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

78 He shone with the dazzle
of the sun at the end
of a yuga. His arrows
were the blazing rays.
His Gāṇḍīva-bow
was the maṇḍala-halo.
The mortal-eyed Kauravas
were unable to look
at blinding Jaya-Arjuna.

79 Smiling, he sliced
with his arrows the shafts
of the Kaurava
mahā-chariot-heroes.
Stretched full, his Gāṇḍīva
made a maṇḍala-circle,
and released a stream
of continuous arrows
at the enemy ranks.

80 O Indra of earth-lords!
Like the blazing sun
in the summer months
of Jyeṣṭha and Āṣāḍha
sucking water-bodies dry,
Arjuna with his arrows
sucked up the energy
and valour of your army,
making it helpless.

81 Kṛpa attacked him,
discharging countless arrows.
And Bhoja-Kṛtavarman,
your son Duryodhana,
and Droṇa's mahā-chariot-hero
son Aśvatthāman
deluged him with arrows
like clouds drenching
a hill with rain.

82 Well-versed-in-war Arjuna
with his arrows
swiftly shredded
the excellent shafts
released by those warriors
bent on killing him,
and wounded the chests
of all of them
with three arrows each.

83 Like the sun blazing
in the summer months
of Jyeṣṭha and Āṣāḍha
with its incandescent
maṇḍala-corona,
Arjuna blazed
against his foes
with his Gāṇḍīva-corona
and his arrow-rays.

84 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
discharged ten arrows
at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
three at Acyuta-Krishna,
and with four arrows
wounded the four horses,
and targeted the ape
in the war-flag
with four *nārāca*-arrows.

85 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
retaliated
attacking the chariot
of Aśvatthāman:
slicing his radiant bow
with three arrows,
his horses with four,
flag three, and charioteer
with one razor-arrow.

86 Brimming with anger,
Aśvatthāman readied
a wondrous mahā-bow
encrusted with gold-work
and gems and diamonds,
glowing like the body
of Takṣaka, and looking
like a mahā-python
emerging from a hill.

87 Flinging aside
his shattered bow
and stringing the new one,
the talented beyond measure
Aśvatthāman,
from close quarters,
shot excellent arrows
at those two invincible
finest-among-men.

88 Kṛpa and the Bhoja-ruler
Kṛtavarman
and your son Duryodhana –
these mahā-chariot-heroes
united in showering
bull-brave Pāṇḍava
Arjuna with arrows –
like so many dark clouds.
blotting the sun.

89 As powerful as thousand-
armed Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
Pārtha-Arjuna shot arrows
that wounded the charioteer
of Kṛpa, and sliced
his bow and war-flag,
like thunderbolt-wielding Indra
shredding the weapons
of Bali in the past.

90 Exactly as he had earlier
on the same battlefield
destroyed with his arrows
the weapons and war-flag
of Āpageya-Bhīṣma,
now diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
devastated Kṛpa
in that mahā-clash.

91 Next to be attacked
by valiant Arjuna
was your son Duryodhana,
whose war-flag and bow
were shredded with arrows.
Next was Kṛtavarman,
whose beautiful horses
were killed and whose
war-flag was shredded.

92 With tremendous speed
Arjuna embarked
on a systematic slaughter
of horses and charioteers,
of bows and chariots
and elephants indiscriminately.
The ranks of the Kauravas
collapsed like a bridge
eroded by floods.

93 Isolating the battered
ranks of the enemy
on his right, Keśava-Krishna
drove on, but like Indra
of a hundred sacrifices
speeding to kill Vṛtra
was Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
observed by the enemy
as he rushed ahead,

94 And they pounced upon him
once again, with flags
fluttering high
on their glittering chariots.
Driving ahead
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
in an attempt to ward off
the enemy attack,
the mahā-chariot-heroes

95 Śikhaṇḍin, and Śini's
grandson Sātyaki,
and the twin brothers
Nakula and Sahadeva,
roaring their war-cries,
blocked the offensive
with sharp arrow-showers.
Shooting swift and fierce shafts,
the enraged Kauravas,

96 Excellent warriors all,
battled with the Sṛñjayas,
like the antigods
with the gods in the past.
O terroriser of foes!
Eager for victory,
yearning for heaven,
elephant-warriors, horse-
riders, chariot-heroes

97 Plunged into the thick
of their foes, shouting
their fierce war-cries
and wounding each other
with well-aimed arrows.
In that mahā-massacre
the mahā-minded warriors
created an arrow-darkness
that blotted the sun
and the four directions
and the minor directions,
wherever one looked.

SECTION EIGHTY

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Kuntī's son Bhīma was drowning
in the attack by the Kaurava leaders.
Seeing this, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

2 O descendant of Bharata,
left the charioteer's son Karṇa.
With his arrows
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
despatched many of these heroes
to the realm of Yama.

3 Some of these arrows
were a network
that obscured the sky,
others swept
through the enemy warriors,
slaughtering them.

4 Trespassing the sky-domain
of birds,
mahā-muscled Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
transformed
himself into a Kaurava-annihilating
Antaka-Kāla.

5 With *bhalla*-arrows,
razor-arrows,
and sleek *nārāca*-arrows,
Pārtha-Arjuna slashed
the limbs of his enemies,
and severed their heads.

6 They lay there,
littering the battlefield,
some dead, some dying,
chopped-off limbs,
headless bodies
with ripped and mangled armour.

7 The field was heaped over
with bits and pieces
of chariots and chariot-horses,
and sliced chunks of elephants
massacred
by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

8 O rājā!
The battlefield looked
like a Mahā-Vaitaraṇī,
a fearful undulating river
of stench and death –
a horrific spectacle.

9 Everywhere shattered chariots,
some with horses, some without;
with broken wheels
and axles and poles;
with charioteers
dead or dying.

10 Ichor-streaming musth elephants,
with golden armour
and gold caparisons,
auspicious beasts
ridden by warriors
clad in golden armour,

11 Spurred
by the heels and toes
of their cruel and wrathful drivers –
four hundred of them
were killed
by Kirīṭin-Arjuna's arrows.

12 They toppled, those elephants,
like mountain peaks
toppling with all manner
of living creatures;
slain by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
they littered the field.

13 Like the golden-rayed sun
piercing through clouds,
the chariot of Arjuna
sped through
the dark-cloud-heap-corpses
of ichor-streaming elephants.

14 Through carcases of elephants,
men and horses;
through the twisted remains
of war-chariots;
through weapon-and-armour-bereft
dead warriors;

15 Through heaps
of scattered arms and missiles,
Arjuna guided his chariot.
The mahā-fearsome sound
of Phālguna-Arjuna
twanging his Gāṇḍīva

16 Was like thunder rolling
and reverberating in the sky.
Battered
and shattered
by the arrows
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

17 Your army reeled
like a ship
buffeted by an ocean storm.
From the Gāṇḍīva whizzed
all sizes and shapes
of life-taking arrows,

18 Like firebrands,
meteors and lightning,
incinerating your soldiers.
Like a clump of bamboo
ablaze at night
in a forest fire,

19 Your army burned
in the arrows fired
by diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
trapped
in a massive conflagration.

20 Encircled by flames,
they scattered and fled
in all directions.
Like birds and beasts
skittering helter-skelter
in a mahā-forest-fire,

21 So fled the Kauravas,
caught in the arrow-conflagration
of Savyasācī-Arjuna,
the ambidexterous warrior.
Leaving mahā-muscled Bhīma
on the battlefield,

22 The afflicted Kaurava forces
turned tail
and dispersed.
Scattering the Kauravas,
invincible daring-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna

23 Took this occasion
to go to Bhīma
and be with him for a while.
Phālguna-Arjuna
consulted with Bhīma
who informed him

24 That the arrows had been removed
from Yudhiṣṭhira's body
and that Yudhiṣṭhira had recovered.
Taking the permission
of Bhīma,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

25 Climbed into his chariot
and left,
the noise of his chariot-wheels
booming in earth and sky.
And then,
your ten bull-brave sons,

26 Born after Duḥśāsana,
surrounded Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
from all sides.
Like hunters with torches
pursuing an elephant,
with fiery arrows

27 Shot from fully stretched bows,
they harassed Arjuna,
dancing with delight
as they did so.
Manoeuvring them to the right,
Madhusūdana-Krishna

28 Swerved the chariot,
confident that Kirīṭin-Arjuna
would soon despatch them
to the realm of Yama.
As the chariot wheeled,
some foolish Kauravas attacked

29 Arjuna, but he shredded
their war-flags and bows,
killed their horses,
and sliced their arrows
with *nārāca*-shafts
and half-moon shafts.

30 With a volley of *bhalla*-arrows,
the severed their heads.
These heads
had eyes blood-red with anger
and clenched lips.
Lying on the ground,

31 They looked as lovely
as a cluster of lotuses.
O descendant of Bharata!
With a volley
of ten mahā-swift
bhalla-arrows,

32 Adorned with gold feathers,
Foe-crushing Arjuna killed
The ten gold-bracelated Kauravas.

SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 Ninety Kaurava chariot-heroes
(continued Sañjaya)
attacked the swiftly advancing
ape-bannered chariot of Arjuna.

2 The Saṁśaptaka suicide squad,
bound by their other-world-oath,
surrounded tiger-among-men Arjuna
from all sides.

3 But Krishna drove
the pure-white swift
gold-and-gem-filigreed-
caparisoned horses
of Arjuna's chariot
straight towards Karṇa.

4 Ninety Saṁśaptaka warriors
rained arrows
on the chariot of foe-crushing
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
as it raced
towards the chariot of Karṇa.

5 With sharp arrows,
Arjuna destroyed
all the ninety fiercely
attacking warriors,
with their charioteers,
bows and war-flags.

6 Fatally pierced by the various arrows
of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
they fell like perfected Siddhas,
merits exhausted,
falling from celestial chariots.

Transcreated by P. Lal

7 Then a host of Kaurava chariots,
elephants and horses
fearlessly attacked
Phālguna-Arjuna,
that finest of the Kauravas
and best of the Bharatas.

8 The foot-soldiers and cavalry
of the army
of your sons were fatigued,
but a division
of huge elephants
obstructed Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

9 The Kaurava family's pride
was Arjuna,
quickly surrounded
by Kaurava mahā-bowmen
who afflicted him
with *śakti*-spears,
ṛṣṭi-swords, *tomara*-lances,
prāsa-barbed darts,
maces, *khaṅga*-scimitars
and arrows.

10 Like the sun dispersing darkness
with its streaming rays,
Pāṇḍava Arjuna scattered all those weapons
with his arrows.

11 Ordered by your son Duryodhana,
one thousand three hundred
Mleccha warriors on fierce elephants
attacked Arjuna from the side.

12 With ear-shaped *karṇī*-missiles,
nālika-pipe darts,
nārāca-arrows, *tomara*-lances,
clubs, *prāsa*-darts,
spears, *bhindipāla*-slicers,
they attacked Arjuna.

13 With *bhalla*-arrows
and half-moon shafts,
Phālguna-Arjuna repulsed
that weapons-shower
discharged by warriors
seated on the trunks of elephants.

14 Like Indra shattering a hill
with his thunderbolt,
Arjuna, with a volley
of excellent multi-symbolled arrows,
massacred all the beflagged elephants
and their riders.

15 Struck by gold-feathered arrows,
those gold-caparisoned mahā-elephants
toppled dead
on the field,
like mountains
resplendently ablaze with forest-fires.

16 O lord of the earth!
The twang of the Gāṇḍīva
could be heard clearly
over the agonised screams
of mutilated men, horses
and elephants.

17 O rājā! Grievously wounded elephants
ran wild.
And horses
whose riders had been killed
galloped helter-skelter
in the ten directions.

18 Mahārāja!
Without their charioteers and horses,
thousands of chariots lay there,
looking like
so many self-flying air-borne
Gandharva cities.

19 O rājā-among-rājās!
Mahārāja!
Pierced by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
horse-riders could be seen
fleeing in panic.

20 That was when Pāṇḍava Arjuna
displayed
the strength of his arms,
by singly decimating
chariots and horse-riders
and elephants.

21 O rājā! One by one,
the elephants,
horses and chariots
regrouped,
and once again resolutely
confronted Arjuna.

22 O rājā! O bull-brave Bharata!
Seeing diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
facing the three forces
of your mahā-army,
Bhīma

23 Left the survivors
of your division
of war-chariots,
O rājā,
and rushed to the chariot
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

24 Most of your soldiers lay dead,
many were wounded.
The others were panic-stricken.
Seeing this,
Bhīma decided to rush
to help Arjuna.

25 Tireless Bhīma,
brandishing his mace,
slaughtered the remaining warriors
of your mahā-army
who had survived
Arjuna's attack.

26 Like the ghastly doomsday night
of Kāla,
the men-elephant-and-horse-devouring,
the wall shattering,
the door-demolishing,
the direly dreadful

27 Mace of Bhīma
was employed by him mercilessly
against men and elephants
and horses.
O respectworthy monarch!
The carnage was colossal.

28 One by one, Pāṇḍava Bhīma
slaughtered the warriors
clad in black iron armour;
then the horses.
Smashed by his mace,
they perished screaming.

29 Bathed in blood, teeth clenched,
they fell on the earth,
some with heads pulped,
bones crushed, feet chopped –
food now
for worms and maggots.

30 And the mace
was a grisly sight –
not satisfied with all that blood,
flesh and marrow,
and crunched bones –
like a night of Kāla, Kāla-rātri.

31 Butchering ten thousand horses
and countless foot-soldiers,
waving his mace,
livid with anger,
Bhīma proudly roamed
the battlefield.

32 O descendant of Bharata!
Seeing him
whirling his mace,
our soldiers thought Yama had come,
brandishing
his Kāla-daṇḍa doomsday rod.

33 Like a *makara*-monster
plunging in an ocean,
Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma,
enraged like a musth elephant,
plunged in the ranks
of the enemy elephants.

34 Waving his massive mace,
infuriated beyond measure,
Bhīma
in no time
despatched the enemy elephants
to the realm of Yama.

35 Encased in armour,
they toppled and fell,
with their riders and flags;
we saw them fall,
like winged mountains would,
if they fell.

36 After exterminating
the entire division
of elephants,
mahā-powerful Bhīma
returned to his chariot,
and followed Arjuna's chariot.

37 Mahārāja! Panic reigned
in the ranks
of your dispirited army,
surrounded as it was
by unrepulsable weapons
and missiles.

38 Seeing your soldiers reduced
to such a pitiful state,
Arjuna
deluged them
with volley upon volley
of death-dealing arrows.

39 They looked as lovely
as pollen-filled kadamba-blossoms –
all those men,
horses, chariots
and elephants
felled by Arjuna's Gāṇḍīva.

40 O king!
The massacre of men,
horses and elephants
by the arrows of Arjuna
made the Kauravas groan
in mahā-lamentation.

41 Screaming "Hai! Hai!"
your terrified warriors
rushed about
in panic-stricken circles,
like
a wheel of fire.

42 The battle with the Kaurava
army continued.
There was no Kaurava chariot,
horse or elephant
not afflicted
by Arjuna's arrows.

43 The battlefield became
a fiery forest
of bright red flowering aśokas!
The warriors were all aflame
with armour
streaming with blood.

44 O finest of the Bharatas!
Though badly wounded
by the sharp arrows
of foe-crushing Phalguna-Arjuna,
your soldiers
kept fighting.

45 O bull-brave Bharata!
It was remarkable –
we saw it with our own eyes –
the valour
of the Kaurava warriors
refusing to surrender.

46 But when they saw
the prowess
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
the Kauravas
lost hope of Karṇa
winning the battle.

47 Debilitated
by the repeated attacks
of Gāṇḍīva-wielding
Pārtha-Arjuna,
the Kauravas finally
began retreating.

48 Terrorised by the arrows
of Arjuna,
they left Karṇa and fled,
but continued
calling out to Karṇa
for help.

49 Shooting hundreds of arrows
and cheering
the spirit of Bhīma
and other Pāṇḍavas,
Arjuna kept up his assault
on your soldiers.

50 Mahārāja! Your sons fled
to Karṇa for help.
They were drowning
in the sea of despair,
and Karṇa
was their only safe island.

51 Mahārāja! Like snakes
deprived of their venom,
afraid
of Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
the Kauravas fled
to Karṇa.

52 O respectworthy monarch!
All creatures of the earth
involved in karma
fear death
and seek the security
of dharma;

53 And so, O lord of men,
your sons,
fearing mahā-ātmaned
Pāṇḍava Arjuna,
ran for shelter
to the mahā-bowman Karṇa.

54 To those arrow-riddled,
bleeding and despairing heroes
Karṇa said:
"Do not fear.
Do not lose hope.
Come to me."

55 Finest-of-arms-experts Karṇa
saw
the Kauravas
routed by Pārtha-Arjuna,
and readied his bow
to destroy the enemy.

56 Well-versed-in-weapons Karṇa
reflected
on the flight of the Kauravas
and sighed deeply.
He made up his mind to kill
Pārtha-Arjuna.

57 Readying his magnificent bow,
Adhiratha's son Vṛṣa-Karṇa
advanced
towards the Pāñcālas,
under the very eyes
of Savyasācī-Arjuna.

58 Eyes livid with anger,
the Pāñcālas
instantly rained arrows
on Karṇa,
like clouds drenching a hill
with showers.

59 O finest of all creatures
who breathe and live!
O respectworthy monarch!
The arrows of Karṇa
began a steady decimation
of the Pāñcālas.

60 O mahā-minded one!
Thus oppressed
by the charioteer's son
seeking the welfare of his friends,
the Pāñcālas
wailed their mahā-distress.

SECTION EIGHTY-TWO

1 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
The Kauravas were fleeing
in abject retreat;
and then, like the wind
dispersing clouds,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
in a white-horsed chariot
began raining arrows
on the Pāñcāla princes.

2 With his *añjalika*-arrows
he killed the charioteer
of Janamajeya
and slaughtered his horses;
with his *bhalla*-arrows
he attacked Śatānīka
and Sutasoma as well,
and succeeded in splintering
the bows of both.

3 Dhṛṣṭadyumna he wounded
with six of his arrows,
and swiftly killed his horses.
After which, Karṇa
the charioteer's son
killed the horses
of Sātyaki; next,
he killed Viśoka,
the Kekaya prince.

4 With the death of Viśoka,
the Kekaya general
Ugrakarman advanced
to challenge Karṇa.
With marvellous dexterity
he shot swift arrows,
and succeeded in wounding
the son of Karṇa,
Prasena.

5 Karṇa only smiled.
With three half-moon arrows
he sliced both the arms
and severed the head
of Ugrakarman,
who toppled from his chariot
like a śāla-tree
felled by an axe,
crashing in a forest.

6 After Karṇa had killed
the horses of Sātyaki,
Karṇa's son Prasena
obscured Śini's grandson
Sātyaki with arrows.
But, pierced by the arrows
of Sātyaki, Prasena,
teetering as if dancing,
collapsed on the field.

7 Aroused to anger
and grieving the death
of his son Prasena,
fitting a death-
dealing shaft to his bow,
targeting the grandson
of Śini, Sātyaki,
Karṇa shouted:
"Sātyaki! You are dead!"

8 But Śikhaṇḍin intervened.
With three arrows he sliced
the arrow of Karṇa,
and with three more arrows
he attacked Karṇa
who with two razor-arrows
shattered the bow
and shredded the war-flag
of Śikhaṇḍin.

9 With six more arrows
brave Karṇa grievously
wounded Śikhaṇḍin
and severed the head
of Dhṛṣṭadyumna's son.
In addition, the mahā-
minded son of Adhiratha,
Karṇa fired arrows
that confounded Sutasoma.

10 O lion-like rājā!
With the son of Dhṛṣṭadyumna
killed in that battle
of tempestuous tumult,
Krishna said: "Arjuna,
Karṇa is massacring
our warriors.
Advance quickly,
and kill him now."

11 Handsome-muscled Arjuna,
finest of heroes,
with a smile on his face,
to protect the Pāñcālas,
swiftly proceeded
in his massive chariot –
a chariot surpassing
all other chariots –
to the chariot of Karṇa.

12 Sliding his palm
on the Gāṇḍīva bowstring,
he stretched the bow taut,
and twanging the bow
he discharged arrows
that darkened the sky
and destroyed the elephants,
horses, chariots and war-flags
of his enemies.

13 When diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
excitedly stretched
his Gāṇḍīva-bow
to a maṇḍala-circle,
the reverberating twang
made his enemies tremble,
and birds fled for shelter
in the caves of hills.

14 The one and only
hero of heroes
Bhīma followed Arjuna,
protecting his rear.
The two Pāṇḍava princes
pushed their way through
the enemy ranks
and advanced to where
Karṇa was stationed.

15 The charioteer's son Karṇa
in the meantime was busy
depleting the Somakas
in a mahā-confrontation,
shrouding the sky
with volleys of arrows
and killing the horses,
elephants and charioteers
of the enemy forces.

16 Uttamaujas, Janamejaya,
infuriated Yudhāmanyu,
and Śikhaṇḍin
and Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
all of them together,
roaring their war-cries,
discharged their arrows
and succeeded in wounding
their enemy Karṇa.

17 The objects of the senses
can never dislodge
the man who is stable
in the strength of his ātman.
And so the five Pāñcālas,
splendid chariot-heroes,
despite their best efforts,
failed to dislodge
Karṇa from his chariot.

18 But Karṇa undeterred
went on destroying
their bows and war-flags,
horses and charioteers.
With five arrows he wounded
the five Pāñcālas,
after which he boomed
his deafening war-cry
like a lion roaring.

19 What a slaughter of foes
was achieved by Karṇa!
Bow always in hand,
continuously twanging!
Such was the thunderous
twang of his bow
it seemed to all present
the earth with its mountains
and forests would shatter.

20 With his massive bow
like the Indra-bow rainbow
stretched to its fullest
like a maṇḍala-circle,
Adhiratha's son Karṇa
shone on the battlefield
like the radiant sun
with its dazzling halo
of arrow-like rays.

21 With twelve sharp arrows
he afflicted Śikhaṇḍin,
with six Uttamaujas,
Yudhāmanyu with three.
And Janamejaya
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna –
both of these warriors
he wounded with three
sharp arrows each.

22 O respectworthy one!
The five Pāñcāla
mahā-chariot-heroes,
vanquished by Karṇa,
stood there petrified,
like the five senses
becoming immobilised
by a man who has conquered
physical desire.

23 Like shipwrecked merchants
rescued from drowning
by boats around them,
so their maternal uncles
were saved from drowning
in the Karṇa-ocean
by the sons of Draupadī
who arrived on the scene
in their war-chariots.

24 The bull-brave grandson
of Śini, Sātyaki
sliced with his arrows
the arrows of Karṇa
and wounded him
with sharp iron arrows,
and with eight more arrows
he afflicted your eldest
son Duryodhana.

25 Kṛpa, Bhoja-Kṛtavarman,
your son and Karṇa
retaliated with arrows
showered on Sātyaki,
but that incomparable Yādava
stood firm against the four,
like the Daitya Hiraṇyakaśipu
battling the four
lords of the quarters.

26 Like the autumn sun,
in the centre of the sky,
blazing incandescent,
so was Sātyaki
impossible to look at
by all his enemies,
as he stood there
with bow fully stretched,
shooting arrows like sunrays.

27 The foe-crushing Pāñcāla
mahā-chariot-heroes,
encased in armour
and riding their chariots,
rushed to rescue Sātyaki,
the grandson of Śini,
like the Maruts who always
are ready to protect
Śakra-Indra.

28 The carnage that followed
in the battle between
your ranks and their foes,
the felling of elephants
and horses and men
and countless chariots,
resembled the carnage
in the past between
the gods and the antigods.

29 Chariot-heroes and elephants,
foot-soldiers and horses
assaulted each other
with multitudinous
weapons and missiles.
They shouted and screamed
in fear and agony,
and often without warning
toppled and died.

30 O rājā! In the thick
of the battle, your son
Duḥśāsana, younger
brother of Duryodhana,
fearlessly showered
arrows on Bhīma
who leapt on Duḥśāsana
like a lion pouncing
on a mahā-*ruru*-deer.

31 Inspired by insatiable
desire for revenge,
the two battled on,
both of them risking
their lives in that clash,
in that dice-game duel.
Their horrendous encounter
resembled the clash
between Śambara and Indra.

32 They fought like two elephants
in the mating season
lustfully battling
over a she-elephant.
Two great heroes,
ferociously attacking
and grievously wounding
each other's bodies
with keen-edged arrows.

33 The instant the heroes
spotted each other
on the field of battle,
Bhīma was the first
to order his charioteer:
"Drive me to Duḥśāsana."
And Duḥśāsana ordered:
"Drive me to wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma."

34 As ordered, the charioteers
manoeuvred the vehicles
which carried all manner
of weapons and missiles
and glittered with fluttering
war-flags and pennants.
Duḥśāsana and Bhīma
resembled Bala and Indra
in the celestial war.

35 Bhīma said: "Duḥśāsana!
It is my good fortune
I have seen you today.
Do you remember the sabhā
when you molested
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī?
For a very long time
I have owed you a debt.
I will pay it back today."

36 Hearing these words,
the brave mahātmā
Duḥśāsana replied:
(continued Sañjaya)
"Listen to me, Bhīma!
I remember clearly.
Every single thing.
I am not
a very forgetful person.

37 Whatever I do,
whatever I say,
I do not forget.
I remember how fearfully
you passed day and night
in the lacquer-house.
I remember all of you
escaping and scrounging
for food in the forest.

38 I remember your days
and nights of mahā-fear.
I remember all of you
wandering joyless
and lost in the forest,
and hiding in caves,
till the day you chanced
to enter the kingdom
of the Pāñcāla rājā.

39 You did that with māyā-
trickery, did you not?
You wore disguises,
deceiving Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to choose as husband
Phālguna-Arjuna.
Then you scoundrels
did something similar
to what your mother did.

40 Draupadī chose only one,
but all five of you
shamelessly enjoyed her.
I remember it well –
it was in the sabhā,
was it not, that Śakuni
announced that you
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī too
had become our slaves?"

41 These words of your son
(continued Sañjaya)
infuriated Bhīma,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara.
With two razor-arrows
he sliced the bow and war-flag,
with one grazed his forehead,
with the fourth decapitated
Duḥśāsana's charioteer.

42 Immediately Duḥśāsana
readied another bow
and with twelve arrows
he restrained Bhīma.
Then, taking the reins
of the chariot-horses,
he again attacked
Bhīma with a volley
of straight-speeding arrows.

43 Duḥśāsana retaliated
with a wondrous arrow,
a glittering shaft
studded with gold-work
and diamonds and gems,
an unrepulsable shaft
like Mahendra-Indra's
thunderbolt, which struck
Bhīma to the core.

44 It pierced Bhīma's body.
Stupefied, he raised
both his arms, and fell
in his splendid chariot.
In no time, however,
Bhīma recovered
his senses, and stood up
in his chariot, and roared
his war-cry like a lion.

SECTION EIGHTY-THREE

1 Many wonderful and difficult feats
were performed
by Duḥśāsana (said Sañjaya)
in that encounter.
With a single arrow
he sliced the bow of Bhīma,
and with sixty
he wounded Bhīma's charioteer.

2 That energetic prince
with nine more arrows
afflicted Bhīma again.
Mahātmā Duḥśāsana
displayed his prowess
when with dexterity,
selecting excellent arrows,
he made Bhīma unable
to strike back.

3 In a towering rage,
Bhīma retaliated
with a *śakti*-spear
hurled at Duḥśāsana.
Seeing that fearful
spear speeding
towards him like
a dazzling shooting
star, your son

4 Drew his bowstring
right up to his ear
and discharged ten arrows
that splintered the spear
in mid-air. Witnessing
that marvellous feat,
the soldiers on the field
burst into applause
and pūjā-praise.

5 Then your son Duḥśāsana
with another arrow
grievously wounded Bhīma,
succeeding only however
in enraging Bhīma.
Glancing in the direction
of Duḥśāsana,
the eyes of Bhīma
burned red with anger.

6 "Brave one," said Bhīma,
"swift were the arrows
you shot at me,
wounding me deeply.
It's time you tasted
the might of my mace!"
Shouting his challenge,
Bhīma wrathfully raised
his death-dealing mace.

7 "Ill-ātmaned scoundrel!"
he shouted. "Today
I will drink your blood."
As soon as he said this,
your son Duḥśāsana
with tremendous speed
hurled at Bhīma
a *śakti*-spear that looked
like death personified.

8 But Bhīma, undaunted,
swung his own mace
like a gruesome missile
and flung it whirling
at his foe. It sped
smashing the *śakti*-spear,
drove straight at your son
Duḥśāsana and thudded
on his head.

9 Like an ichor-streaming
rutting elephant
was Bhīma with blood
dripping down his body
when enraged he hurled
that formidable mace
which struck Duḥśāsana
and flung him back
ten bow-lengths away.

10 He fell.
Duḥśāsana fell.
He fell on the ground,
trembling all over.
His armour was torn.
His dress in tatters.
His ornaments and necklace
lay scattered
on the field.

11 O Indra-among-men!
Duḥśāsana fell,
and the mace smashed
his chariot, charioteer,
and all his horses.
Seeing him helpless,
the Pāṇḍavas and Pāñcālas
burst into joyful
lion-like roaring.

12 Eliminating Duḥśāsana
in this way, wolf-waisted
Vṛkodara-Bhīma
roared so loudly
the ten directions trembled.
O Ajamīḍha monarch!
So loud was the roaring
the warriors who stood near
were rendered unconscious.

13 Leaping from his chariot,
Bhīma raced across the field
to where Duḥśāsana lay
half dead. As he ran
he remembered the taunts,
the humiliations
and the crimes which your sons
had perpetrated
on him and his brothers.

14 O rājā!
The tumultuous battle
raged on
between all the great rulers
all around him.
But mahā-muscled Bhīma
of inconceivable prowess
looked at Duḥśāsana
and recalled the past:

15 'Devī Draupadī
was in her period,
innocent lady,
hair dishevelled,
refused by her husbands,
disrobed in public
by Duḥśāsana!'
And all the other
sufferings and insults

16 Bhīma recalled,
and his anger flared up
like ghee-fed flames
of the sacred fire.
He shouted to Karṇa,
Suyodhana-Duryodhana,
Kṛpa,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
and Kṛtavarman:

17 "Today
I will kill
this criminal Duḥśāsana.
Come, you great warriors,
save him if you can!"
Saying this
the hugely powerful Bhīma
sprang forward
to kill Duḥśāsana.

18 Wolf-waisted brilliant-in-battle
Vṛkodara-Bhīma, hero of heroes,
leapt like a lion
on a mahā-elephant
to kill Duḥśāsana
in the very presence
of Suyodhana-Duryodhana
and Adhiratha's son
Karṇa.

19 He had eyes only
for Duḥśāsana,
as he leapt from his chariot
and raced across the field.
He lifted
his sharp-edged white sword.
He placed his foot
on the throat
of trembling Duḥśāsana.

20 He said:
"Ill-ātmaned scoundrel!
Remember the day
madness possessed you
and you called me 'Cow'
in front of Karṇa
and Suyodhana-Duryodhana?
Remember, at the Rājasūya,
after her menstrual *avabhṛta*-bath,
Yājñasenī-Draupadī–

21 How you dragged her
by her hair?
Tell me! Which hand?
Bhīma asks you!"
He heard
these awesome words of Bhima,
and Duḥśāsana looked
at Bhīma.

22 Anger inflamed him.
He heard those words
on the field of battle
and his whole expression changed.
He smiled,
and in front of all
the Kauravas and Somakas
he said passionately:

23 "See this hand!
It is thick
like an elephant's trunk!
It has squeezed
the full breasts
of many lovely women!
It has gifted
thousands of cows!
It has killed
many Kṣatriyas!

24 You were there, Bhīma!
You saw me in the sabhā
drag Yājñasenī-Draupadī
by her hair!
All the glorious Kauravas
saw me too!"

25 Bhīma heard these words
of the rājā's son.
He stood on the chest
of Duḥśāsana,
gripped both his arms
and roared these words
to the assembled warriors:

26 "I will uproot this arm!
Duḥśāsana does not want
to live any more.
Let him who wants to save him,
stop me!" Mahā-powerful,

27 Infuriated mahātmā Bhīma
with one hand
swiftly ripped Duḥśāsana's arm
from his body –
an arm as hard
as a thunderbolt –
and started clubbing Duḥśāsana
with it.

28 O rājā!
Ripping apart the chest
of Duḥśāsana,
he drank the warm blood.
Duḥśāsana tried to rise,
Bhīma pushed him down.

29 Keeping his promise, he severed
Duḥśāsana's head with his sword
and sipped the warm blood with relish.
Then, looking at him, he said angrily:

30 "Milk from my mother's breast,
honey and ghee,
excellently produced flower wine,
sweet water from heaven,
payodadhi-sweet curd,
freshly churned butter –

31 These, and many other
delicious drinks –
some as sweet as nectar –
have I relished in this world;
but none as sweet
as the blood of my foe."

32 Horrible-deed-doer Bhīma
saw Duḥśāsana lifeless,
laughed loudly and said:
"What's this, O Kuru?
Death has saved you
from a fate worse than death!"

33 He said this,
and sipped the blood
and leapt and danced
in joy.
Those who saw him then
fainted in sheer terror.

34 Those who did not faint
were petrified:
weapons slipped
from their hands.
Fearfully they whispered
to their comrades,
peering from half-closed lids.

35 Those next to Bhīma,
seeing him sipping blood,
fled in terror, muttering,
"He is no human being."

36 Seeing the grisly appearance
of Bhīma
as he savoured the blood
of Duḥśāsana,
many in fear thought him
a rākṣasa
and fled the battlefield
with Citrasena.

37 Seeing Citrasena fleeing,
prince Yudhamanyu chased him,
and wounded him
with seven sharp arrows.

38 Like a stepped-on snake
wriggling and spitting venom,
Citrasena turned,
and shot three arrows
at Pāñcāla Yudhāmanyu,
and six at his charioteer.

39 Warrior-of-warriors Yudhāmanyu
stretched his bow
to the full and shot
a lovely-feathered sharp-edged arrow
that sliced
Citrasena's head.

40 Seeing his brother Citrasena
decapitated,
infuriated Karṇa assaulted
the Pāṇḍava ranks,
and infinitely energetic Nakula
confronted him.

41 And Bhīma, killing Duḥśāsana,
and cupping a palmful of his blood
as *añjali*-offering,
began roaring fiercely,

42 And shouted
to the world-celebrated warriors
on the field of battle:
"Vile scoundrel!
Look! I am drinking blood
from your throat!

43 Come! Where are you now?
Why don't you call me now,
'Cow! Cow!'
Those who danced
in the sabhā then, saying,
'Cow! Cow!' –

44 Let them see us now!
We are the ones dancing,
saying, 'Cow! Cow!'
You fed me
kālakūṭa-poison
at Pramāṇakoṭi,

45 Dumped me in the river,
had black snakes bite me,
burnt me
in the lacquer house,
cheated us at dice
and sent us to forest-exile,

46 Dragged Draupadī
by her hair –
a horrible deed –
assaulted us with weapons,
gave us no peace
at home,

47 And all know
how we suffered
in the kingdom of Virāṭa.
The machinations of Śakuni,
Duryodhana,
and Rādhā's son Karṇa –

48 You are the sole root
of all the sufferings
they caused us.
How we suffered!
Never was there
any happiness for us.

49 The wickedness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and his sons
brought these sorrows on us."
Mahārāja!
Having said this,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma smiled,
and victorious in war,
said to Arjuna and Keśava-Krishna –

50 Blood-drenched, red-eyed, enraged,
Infuriated Bhīma: "Brave ones!
The promise I made regarding Duḥśāsana,
I have today fulfilled on the field.

51 I will have peace at last
by offering
this yajña-beast Duryodhana
as sacrifice,
and crushing with my foot
the head
of this ill-ātmaned wretch
in front of the Kauravas."

52 Blood drenched the body
of super-powerful
mahātmā Bhīma
as he joyfully roared
these words,
like thousand-eyed Indra
roaring his victory-cry
after killing the antigod Vṛtra.

SECTION EIGHTY-FOUR

1 After the death
of Duḥśāsana
(continued Sañjaya)
your ten never-turning-
their-backs mahā-chariot-
hero sons,
mahā-infuriated,

2 And mahā-heroic,
O rājā,
all ten of them,
shrouded Bhīma with arrows.
Niṣaṅgi, Kavacī, Pāśi,
Daṇḍadhara, Dhanurgraha,

3 Ālolupa, Śala,
Sandha, Vātavega,
Suvarcas – all of them,
grieving the death
of their brother,
joined hands

4 And blocked the advance
of mahā-muscled Bhīma
with their arrows.
Restrained on all sides
by the arrows
of these mahā-chariot-heroes,

5 Bhīma's eyes flared red.
In his wrath
he looked like Kāla personified.
With ten mahā-swift
bhalla-arrows,
blocking the Bharata warriors

6 Who wore golden armlets –
with those gold-feathered arrows
Pārtha-Bhīma
despatched them to Yama's realm.
With those heroes dead,
your army fled

7 In fear, under the very eyes
of Karṇa,
the charioteer's son.
Mahārāja!
Mahā-fear also
troubled Karṇa

8 When he witnessed Bhīma's prowess,
the same mahā-fear
that human beings have
of Antaka-Death.
Famed-in-war Śalya,
seeing Karṇa's discomfiture,

9 Said to foe-crushing Karṇa
these appropriate words:
"Son of Rādhā!
Do not worry.
Anxiety of this kind
does not become you.

10 True, afraid of Bhīma,
all these rājās
are running away.
Dazed by the death of his brother,
Duryodhana
does not know what to do.

11 Even as mahā-ātmaned Bhīma
was drinking
the blood of Duḥśāsana,
with deeply
depressed minds
and grief-choked hearts

12 Kṛpa and many others
who survived the battle –
the brothers
of Duryodhana –
quickly gathered around him
in his crisis.

13 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and the other Pāṇḍavas
have finalised their plans
and have decided
to meet you face to face
on the battlefield,

14 O tiger-among-men!
Keep this in mind.
Cherish manliness
and Kṣatriya dharma,
and proceed against
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna

15 O mahā-muscled one!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son
Duryodhana has placed
full responsibility on you.
Fight with all
the śakti you have!

16 Win – and gain glory!
Lose – and gain heaven!
Son of Rādhā,
look at your son
Vṛṣasena who,
roused to anger,

17 And upset
by your confused indecision,
is advancing
against the Pāṇḍavas."
Saying this,
infinitely energetic Śalya paused;
and Karṇa
in his heart
decided that battle
was inevitable.

18 And so it happened
that enraged Vṛṣasena
launched an attack
on Pāṇḍava Bhīma
who, mace in hand,
wolf-waisted Bhīma,
was battling your army
like Kāla himself
with his doomsday rod.

19 Seeing the son of Karṇa
Vṛṣasena
joyously lording the field,
finest of heroes Nakula
in a burst of anger
deluged him with arrows,
like Maghavat-Indra
in the distant past
attacking Jambha.

20 With a razor arrow
heroic Nakula
shredded the war-flag
of Vṛṣasena, studded
with *sphaṭika*-crystals.
With a *bhalla*-shaft
he splintered the exquisite
gold-filigreed bow
of Vṛṣasena.

21 Instantly stringing
a second bow,
Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena,
an expert in the art
of battling with weapons
of all varieties,
afflicted Nakula
with a massive shower
of celestial missiles.

22 O rājā! Like fire
flaming ever higher
with oblations of ghee,
the valour of Vṛṣasena,
Karṇa's son, increased
with each arrow-volley,
with his dazzling skill
in the use of weapons,
his passionate dedication.

23 With his marvellous weapons
he slaughtered the horses
of Nakula's chariot –
pedigreed horses
from the land of Vanāyu,
pure white complexioned,
fleet-footed horses,
caparisoned in nets
of gold-filigree.

24 Jumping from his horseless chariot,
Nakula
picked up a shield
embossed with glittering
gold-plated moons,
and a sky-smooth sword.
Brandishing these,
he looked like a bird
bobbing up and down.

25 Whirling his sword,
the versatile warrior
struck down chariots,
horses and their riders
and elephants as well.
They fell on the ground
like sacrificial beasts
ritually slaughtered
at a Horse-Sacrifice.

26 Eager for victory,
Nakula, singly,
killed two thousand warriors
from different lands,
sandalpaste-anointed,
well-versed-in-warfare,
true to their vows
of dedicated loyalty,
and very well paid.

27 All of a sudden
Vṛṣasena advanced
alongside Nakula
and ringed his opponent
with a volley of arrows.
Infuriated Nakula,
though wounded himself,
succeeded in wounding
Vṛṣasena similarly.

28 On that fearful occasion,
under the protection
of his brother Bhīma,
Nakula displayed
incredible valour.
Mahātmā Nakula
destroyed innumerable
foot-soldiers and horses,
elephants and chariots

29 As if playing a game,
till valiant Vṛṣasena
put an end to the massacre
by wounding Nakula
with eighteen arrows.
O rājā!
Afflicted in that mahā-clash
by the prowess
of Vṛṣasena,

30 The agile and heroic
Pāṇḍu's son Nakula
swiftly advanced
towards the son of Karṇa,
determined to kill him.
Like a hawk in the sky
with wings outspread
swooping to gobble
a chunk of meat,

31 Raced the vastly-valiant-
in-war Nakula,
but was quickly stopped
by Vṛṣasena's arrows.
With a wonderful series
of complex manoeuvres,
Nakula succeeded
in neutralising the volley
of Vṛṣasena's arrows,

32 But, O Indra-among-men,
not before Vṛṣasena,
the son of Karṇa,
with mahā-powerful arrows,
had managed to shatter
the thousand-starred shield
of Nakula as he whirled
on the battlefield
waving his sword.

33 A sword
of tempered steel
sharp-edged
strong and sturdy
unsheathed
awesome-looking
slicer of the bodies
of enemies
fearful like a snake –

34 That whirling sword
was disintegrated
by six swift and sharp arrows
fired from the bow
of always-victorious-in-facing-the-enemy
Vṛṣasena;
after which, he wounded Nakula
grievously in the chest
with sharp flaming arrows.

35 O rājā!
Having performed feats
difficult for others,
deeds dedicated
to the welfare of others,
mahātmā Nakula,
afflicted with arrows,
quickly climbed
into Bhīma's chariot.

36 Horseless, and oppressed
by Vṛṣasena's arrows,
Mādrī's son Nakula,
before the very eyes
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
bounding like a lion
on the slope of a hill,
leapt quickly.
inside Bhīma's chariot.

37 Infuriated by this,
the valiant warrior,
mahātmā Vṛṣasena,
seeing the two Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes
safe in one chariot,
released a volley
of arrows at them,
aiming to kill both.

38 When the chariot of Nakula,
son of Pāṇḍu,
was destroyed, and his sword
shattered by arrows,
a host of Kauravas
gathered their forces
and fired a ceaseless
shower of shafts
on the two Pāṇḍavas.

39 The two sons of Pāṇḍu,
Bhīma and Arjuna,
in a fury of anger,
blazed like the ghee-
fed flames of a yajña.
They rained a volley
of terrible arrows
on all the Kauravas
gathered around them.

40 The son of the wind-god
Māruti-Bhīma
said to Phālguna-Arjuna:
"Look, the son of Karṇa
is harassing Nakula.
He's audacious enough
to attack even us.
Let's take action
against the son of Karṇa."

41 When diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
drove his chariot alongside
the chariot of Bhīma,
Nakula drove up too
and said to brave Arjuna:
"Dear brother,
kill Vṛṣasena
now."

42 When he heard these words
of his brother Nakula
who had brought his chariot
alongside of his,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
in the ape-bannered chariot
driven by Keśava-Krishna,
rushed towards Vṛṣasena.

SECTION EIGHTY-FIVE

1 "Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena
(continued Sañjaya)
has sliced the war-flag of Nakula,
shattered his sword,
deprived him
of his chariot;
Nakula is the target
of enemy-arrows,
Vṛṣasena's weapons
have baffled him" –
finest-of-men Bhīma
heard this,
and ordered:
"Let all chariot-heroes
whose war-flags
are fluttering
and horses restive –
let them assemble here."

2 Brandishing their weapons,
the five excellent
enemy-challenging sons
of Drupada,
Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
the five sons
of the daughter of Drupada,
Draupadī–
these eleven turned up,
shattering, on their way,
with serpent-like arrows,
elephants, horses,
chariots and foot-soldiers.

3 From your side, to face them,
on cloud-and-elephant-noisy chariots,
wielding divine weapons, came chariot-heroes:
Kṛpa, Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman,
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman,
Śakuni's son Ulūka, Vṛka, Krātha, Devāvṛdha,

4 O king!
Your excellent heroes
shooting volleys of arrows
checked the eleven
advancing Pāṇḍavas.
Then the Kulindas attacked,
riding elephants
with new black cloud skins
hill-huge bodies
and wind-swift speeds.

5 They looked so beautiful,
these elephants
from the Himālayas,
with gold-filigree trappings
and war-thirsting Kulinda warriors
riding them –
on the battlefield
they looked
like lightning-charged clouds.

6 First to attack was
the Kalinda prince,
targeting Śaradvat's son
Kṛpa, his charioteer
and horses with ten
tempered steel arrows.
Kṛpa retaliated,
and he and his elephant
collapsed on the field.

7 The younger brother
of the Kulinda prince
shattered the chariot
of the lord of Gāndhāra
Śakuni
with steel *tomara*-lances
glittering like the sun
and roared;
but Śakuni severed the head
of the roaring prince.

8 Your mahā-chariot-heroes
were ecstatic
over the elimination
of the Pulindas.
Peal after peal
blew from their conches,
and they prepared themselves,
brandishing their bows,
for fresh offensives.

9 That signalled the start
of a gruesome clash
between the Kauravas
and the combined might
of the Pāṇḍavas and Sṛñjayas,
in which arrows, swords,
śaktis, scimitars, clubs
and hatchets decimated
men, horses and elephants.

10 Like lightning-and-thunder-
filled clouds scattering
in all ten directions
before the velocity
of a stupendous storm,
the war-thirsting warriors
scattered against the onslaught
of chariots and horses,
elephants and foot-soldiers.

11 It was Kṛtavarman
who attacked the elephants
and horses and chariots
and foot-soldiers whose leader
was Śatānīka.
Struck by the arrows
of Kṛtavarman,
they fell on the field,
one atop the other.

12 It was Aśvatthāman
who next decimated
three huge elephants
with their riders and weapons
and war-flags.
When those elephants fell,
they lay on the field
in three heaps
like three mahā-mountains.

13 With three excellent arrows
the third Kulinda prince
grievously wounded
your son Duryodhana
in his chest. Duryodhana
with sharp arrows
that pierced the bodies
of both the prince
and the elephant.

14 In the rainy season
an ochre-coloured hill,
struck by the thunderbolt
of Mahendra-Indra,
streams crimson water.
So gleamed the elephant
and the Kulinda prince,
blood streaming down their bodies
as they fell on the field.

15 One more elephant
of the Kulinda prince
advanced into battle,
trampling the charioteer,
horses and chariot
of Krātha, but toppled
along with its rider,
like a mountain
riven by a thunderbolt.

16 But like a tree uprooted
by a swirling storm
thudding on the ground,
Krātha also fell
with horses and charioteer,
bow and war-flag,
pierced by the arrows
of a hill-warrior
riding an elephant.

17 With twelve arrows
Vṛka seriously injured
the rājā of the hills,
whose massive elephant,
looming over Vṛka,
trampled into pulp
with all four feet
the chariot and charioteer
and Vṛka as well.

18 This elephant with its rider
was killed by the arrows
of the son of Babhrū.
Next came the turn
of Devāvṛdha's son
who was the target
of a fatal assault
by the son
of Sahadeva.

19 To kill Śakuni,
the second Kulinda prince
selected an elephant
known to mutilate
the finest of warriors
with body, tusks and trunk.
Though severely wounded,
the ruler of Gāndhāra
beheaded the prince.

20 It was Śatānīka next
who attacked your army.
Like snakes falling,
sliced by the wings
of Suparṇa-Garuḍa,
pieces of elephant, horse,
chariot and foot-soldier,
sliced by Śatānīka,
littered the battlefield.

21 The son of the king
of Kaliṅga, smiling,
afflicted with arrows
Nakula's son Śatānīka.
Infuriated Śatānīka,
with a razor-arrow,
sliced the lotus-faced
head of the son
of the king of Kaliṅga.

22 With three sharp arrows
of tempered steel,
Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena
injured Śatānīka.
with three more, Arjuna;
with another three, Bhīma;
Nakula with seven;
and with twelve arrows,
Janārdana-Krishna.

23 This unparalleled feat
of Vṛṣasena
delighted the Kauravas,
and they applauded
with shouts of pūjā-respect.
But those who knew
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's valour
realised that Vṛṣasena
would soon be sacrificed.

24 Destroyer-of-enemy-heroes
and finest-of-men
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
saw the horses of Nakula,
Mādrī's son, slain,
and Krishna himself
seriously injured
by Vṛṣasena.

25 He attacked Vṛṣasena
who at the time
was standing near Karṇa.
Seeing the terrifying
finest-of-all-heroes,
the wielder-of-thousands-
of-arrows Arjuna
advancing towards him
in that mahā-battleground –

26 Arjuna the undisputed
mahā-chariot-hero –
Vṛṣasena rushed at him
like Namuci in the past
confronted Mahendra-Indra.
With a single sharp arrow
Karṇa's son Vṛṣasena
wounded Pṛthā-Kuntī's
son Arjuja;

27 The mahā-experienced
Vṛṣasena roared his war-cry,
exactly as Namuci
roared when he afflicted
Śakra-Indra. Then,
he attacked again,
this time targeting
a spot just below
Arjuna's left arm.

28 With nine arrows
he wounded Krishna;
and with ten more,
Pārtha-Arjuna again.
Becoming the target
again of the arrows
of Vṛṣasena
roused in the mind
of white-horsed Arjuna

29 A glorious anger.
He made up his mind
to kill the son
of Karṇa, Vṛṣasena.
On the battlefield,
on the angry forehead
of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
three furrows appeared,

30 Indicating the decision
of mahātmā Arjuna
to kill Karṇa's son,
and instantly he started
shooting volleys of arrows.
Eyes red with anger,
he looked as if he could kill
even Antaka-Yama.
Smiling, he said to Karṇa,

31 Duryodhana, Droṇa's
son Aśvatthāman,
and other chiefs:
"In front of your eyes,
today, Karṇa,
I will despatch
with my arrows
your fearful son
to the realm of death.

32 My chariot-hero son,
valiant Abhimanyu
was all alone
when all of you
together killed him.
Everyone says
what you did was wrong.
I will kill
Vṛṣasena today.

33 O you great chariot-heroes
sitting in your chariots!
Save your son today
if you can! First,
I will kill Vṛṣasena,
and then,
before the day is over,
I, Arjuna, will kill
the fool called Karṇa.

34 You are the root
of all this evil!
Yours is the ego
puffed up by Duryodhana!
You are the one
I will kill,
yes, on the field
of battle today.
And Bhīma will kill

35 Duryodhana the scoundrel
who is responsible
for the mahā-massacre
you are witnessing now."
Having said this,
Arjuna wiped his bow
and targeting
the son of Karṇa,
Vṛṣasena,

36 O rājā,
mahātmā Arjuna
rained arrows on him,
determined to kill him.
Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
smiled and pierced
his sensitive parts
with ten arrows.

37 With four razor arrows.
he splintered his bow,
sliced both his arms
and severed his head.
Armless, headless, lifeless,
victim of the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
he tumbled from his chariot
and fell on the field

38 Like a massive *śāla*
full of beautiful flowers
uprooted by a storm,
rolling down on the slope
of a mountain.
Seeing his son falling,
butchered with arrows,
Karṇa, the swift-mover,
the charioteer's son,

39 Rushed his chariot angrily
alongside the chariot
of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.
Seeing his son killed
by white-horsed Arjuna,
mahātmā Karṇa,
flaming with anger,
attacked Krishna and Arjuna.

SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 Mahā-bodied Karṇa
(continued Sañjaya)
difficult-to-defeat
even by the gods,
roared and attacked,
like an over-billowing ocean.

2 The bull-brave hero
of the Dāśārha clan,
Krishna, saw
him advancing, smiled,
and said to Arjuna:
"There he comes,
the white-horsed one,
riding his chariot,
with Śalya his charioteer.

3 Look at the variety
of war-flags and pennants
fluttering on his chariot!
And the network of tinkling
kiṅkiṇi-bells!
And the white horses
racing the chariot
like a sky-vehicle
skimming in the sky!

4 Look at the war-flag
of mahā-ātmaned Karṇa
with its elephant-rope symbol!
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
It is Karṇa himself,
the man you must fight.

5 Calm yourself.
O son of Pāṇḍu,
Rādhā's son himself
is ensconced
in that splendid
white-horsed chariot.

6 Like the rainbow
    of Ākhaṇḍala-Indra,
his war-flag soars
    in the sky.
See, he is here,
    Duryodhana's well-wisher.

7 He shoots his arrows
    like torrents of rain.
The ruler of Madra,
    rājā Śalya
is sitting in the front
    of the chariot,

8 And expertly guiding
    the horses
of the infinitely energetic
    son of Rādhā.
Listen! *Dundubhi*-drums,
    conches fiercely blaring,

9 O son of Pāṇḍu,
    and multiple lion-roars
of victory!
    Infinitely energetic Karṇa
is brandishing
    his mahā-cacophonous

10 Splendid bow,
    whose twang resounds
above all other noises.
    The mahā-chariot-hero Pāñcālas
are fleeing
    with their followers

11 Like a herd of deer
    fleeing from a lion
in a mahā-forest.
    O son of Kuntī!
Do your best to kill
    the charioteer's son.

12 No one but you
has the courage
to face Karṇa's arrows.
Gods, antigods,
all moving and unmoving creatures
of the three worlds –

13 You have the power
to defeat them all.
This I know.
The awesome, three-eyed,
matted-haired,
mahātmā Śarva-Śiva,

14 Auspicious-lord-of-all
Śiva,
Mahādeva Śiva himself,
the Lord whom none
has the power to see,
let alone fight –

15 That Sthāṇu divinity
you have confronted
and propitiated,
and received his boons.
So, by the grace
of the trident-wielding god-of-gods,

16 O Pārtha-Arjuna,
O mahā-muscled one,
kill Karṇa, as Vṛtra-slayer Indra
killed Namuci.
May all go well with you always.
May victory be yours."

17 "O Madhusūdana-Krishna!"
replied Arjuna,
"I will win. I know that.
Because you,
the guru of all the worlds,
are pleased with me.

18 O Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna!
O mahā-chariot-hero!
Drive my chariot forward!
Phālguna-Arjuna
will not return from the field
without killing Karṇa.

19 You will see me today,
Govinda-Krishna,
cut Karṇa to pieces.
Either I do that,
or I fall victim
to his arrows.

20 The three worlds will be dazed
by the battle
that is fought today.
So long as this world lasts,
will this battle
be remembered."

21 Saying this to Krishna
of unflagging achievement,
Pārtha-Arjuna drove swiftly
to Karṇa,
like one elephant
advancing upon another.

22 Energetic Pārtha-Arjuna
said again
to foe-crushing Krishna:
"Hṛṣikeśa-Krishna!
Urge the horses faster!
The time is flying."

23 When the mahā-ātmaned
son of Pāṇḍu said this,
Krishna gave him
the pūjā-blessing of victory,
and drove
the mind-swift horses
to the battlefield.
In no time at all,
the mind-swift chariot halted
in front of Karṇa.

[VIII:87:1-6]

Transcreated by P.Lal

SECTION EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 Karṇa witnessed Vṛṣasena's death
(continued Sañjaya)
and tears of grief for his son
streamed from his eyes.

2 Eyes red with anger,
valiant Karṇa swiftly drove
his chariot to the field,
challenging Dhanañjaya-Arjunas

3 The two tiger-skin-draped
sun-dazzling chariots
faced each other on the field
like two suns.

4 White the horses
of both.
Celestial foe-crushing
heroes both.
Mahā-ātmaned warriors
both.
Effulgent like sun and moon
both.

5 O respectworthy monarch!
Seeing the two,
like Indra and Virocana's son Bali
warring
for the three worlds,
the soldiers were awe-struck.

6 Chariots rattling, hands clapping,
arrows whistling,
lion-roaring war-cries,
the two heroes
confronted each other
on the field of battle, –

7 When they witnessed this,
the earth-lords
marvelled at the spectacle
of Karṇa with his elephant-rope
and Kirīṭin-Arjuna
with his Vānara war-flag.

8 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing the two chariots
facing each other,
the earth-lords
broke into lion-roaring praise:
"Excellent! Excellent!"

9 And the thousands of soldiers
saw the two chariots,
and started slapping
their arms-pits
and shaking and flapping
their uniforms.

10 To please and inspire Karṇa,
the Kaurava soldiers
began playing
musical instruments
and started blowing
their war-conches.

11 To inspire Dhananjaya-Arjuna,
the Pāṇḍavas also
filled all the directions
with the reverberations
of their musical instruments
and war-conches.

12 The chariot-clash between
Karṇa and Arjuna
was preceded
by fearsome noises of war-cries,
hand-clapping, shouting
and armpit-slapping.

13 What the soldiers saw:
Two tigers-among-men
Bravest of chariot-heroes
Brandishing mahā-bows
With arrows and *śakti*-spears
And war-flags.

14 Both in coats-of-mail
Swords strapped to their waists
Both with pure-white horses
Both with beautiful conches
Armed with splendid quivers
Both excellently handsome

15 The bodies of both
Anointed with red sandalpaste
Both like infuriated bulls
Both with bows and war-flags
Flashing like lightning
Both well-versed-in-warfare

16 With chowrie fan-whisks
And whips and white umbrellas
The charioteer of one being Śalya
Of the other Krishna
Both of them in valour
Identical mahā-chariot-heroes

17 Both with lion-like shoulders
Long arms and red eyes
And wearing golden garlands
Around strong lion-like necks
Both broad-chested
And mahā-powerful

18 Both determined to kill each other
Both yearning for victory
Both ready to battle
Like two bulls in a cowshed
Both like two musth elephants
Ichor-streaming infuriated beasts

19 Both like two stubborn mountains
Like two venomous snake-
Children of massive serpents
Like Yama-Kāla-Antaka
Angry like Indra battling Vṛtra
Both sun-and-moon resplendent

20 Like two angry mahā-planets
Rushing to destroy the world
Both like children of gods
Both brave as gods
Both as ravishingly handsome
As gods .

21 Both looking as if sun and moon
Had descended on the earth
Both on the field of battle
Valiant and arrogant
Both brandishing a variety
Of war-weapons –

22 O lord of the earth!
Seeing those tigers-among-men
facing each other
like two lions,
your army's soldiers horripilated
with delight.

23 Seeing those tigers-among-men
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna and Karṇa,
all present there
to witness the battle
began to wonder
who would win.

24 Both were armed
with the finest of weapons,
both brilliant in warfare,
and both deafened the sky
with the slapping
of their arm-pits.

25 Renowned for their feats,
in strength and valour,
they were
like the anti-god Śambara
and the rājā-of-the-gods
Indra.

26 In battle both were like
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
like Daśaratha's son Rāma,
like Viṣṇu himself,
and in war-prowess
like Bhava-Śiva.

27 O rājā! The horses of both
were white,
they rode the finest
of chariots,
their charioteers were the best
on the battlefield.

28 Mahārāja!
The Siddhas and Cāraṇas
present on the battlefield
were awe-struck
by the resplendence
of those two mahā-chariot-heroes.

29 O bull-brave Bharata!
Without wasting time,
all the warriors
of your army
formed a ring
around mahā-atmaned Karṇa.

30 O finest of the Bharatas!
And Dhṛṣṭadyumna
and other Pāṇḍava warriors
also formed a ring
around
mahā-ātmaned Pārtha-Arjuna.

31 Nakula and Sahadeva,
Cekitana,
and the excited Prabhadrakas,
others from many lands
and many warriors
eager to give battle –

32 These also quickly surrounded
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Foot-soldiers, cavalry, chariots,
elephants –
all manoeuvred to reinforce
foe-crushing Arjuna.

33 They dedicated themselves
to killing Karṇa
and ensuring the victory
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
O rājā! Similarly,
Duryodhana
and your other sons
prepared for the battle
with a defensive formation
protecting Karṇa.

34 O lord of the earth!
All your warriors were staked for Karṇa,
all their warriors
for Pārtha-Arjuna.

35 Dice-game observers had now become pawns.
In the dice-game of war,
one surely loses,
another surely wins.

36 And so, while our warriors
and their warriors watched,
the two heroes
played the dice-game of war,
for victory
or defeat.

37 Mahārāja!
Resplendent they stood
on the field of battle,
the two heroes,
angrily seeking
each other's death.

38 *Prabhu*! Lord!
They were like Indra
and the antigod Vṛtra.
They were like
two fearful-to-look-at meteors,
mahā-shooting stars.

39 O bull-brave Bharata!
The inhabitants
of the inter-space realm
debated and quarrelled
on who would win –
Karṇa or Arjuna.

40 O respectworthy monarch!
All of them
were divided in their views –
gods, Dānava antigods,
gandharvas, *piśācas,*
uraga-serpents and rākṣasas –

41 Some were for Karṇa,
others for Arjuna.
The sky-goddess Dyau,
like a mother for a son,
favoured
the charioteer's son Karṇa.

42 But Bhūmi the earth-goddess,
like a mother for a son,
wished victory
for Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Mountains and oceans
and rippling rivers,

43 Trees and plants were all
for diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.
O foe-crushing hero!
Antigods and Yātudhānas
and Guhyakas

44 Delightedly took the side
of Karṇa.
Munis, Cāraṇas,
Siddhas,
Vinatā's descendants
the Garuḍas, birds,

45 Jewels, minerals,
all the Vedas, Upavedas,
the fifth Veda Mahābhārata,
the Upaniṣads,
the esoteric Rahasyas,
the Saṁgraha-treatises,

46 Vāsuki, Citrasena,
Takṣaka, Maṇika,
all the serpents,
Kadrū's descendants
with their hosts
of dynasties;

47 Also, mahārāja,
the venomous Nāgas,
Airāvata, the descendants
of Surabhi and Vaiśali –
all of them
were on Arjuna's side.

48 The lesser breed of snakes
took the side of Karṇa.
The Īhā-,
Vyāla- and Maṅgala-
species of animals,
and the birds –

49 These, O rājā,
all desired the victory
of Pārtha-Arjuna.
The Vasus, Maruts,
Sādhyas, Rudras,
Viśva-devas, twin Aśvins,

50 Agni, Indra,
Soma, Pavana,
the ten directions
supported Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
The Ādityas
supported Karṇa.

51 Mahārāja!
Vaiśyas and Śūdras,
charioteers and other Sūtas,
all mixed castes
sang the praises
of Rādhā's son Karṇa.

52 The gods, the *pitṛs,*
Yama, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
and Varuṇa
with all their hosts
of followers and attendants
favoured Arjuna,

53 As did Brahmā,
the Kṣatriyas, Yajñas
and Daksiṇās.
The Preta-spirits,
Piśāca-bloodsuckers,
carnivorous birds and beasts,

54 Rākṣasas, sea-monsters,
dogs and jackals
favoured Karṇa.
The deva-ṛṣis, Brahma-ṛṣis
and royal ṛṣis
favoured Pāṇḍava-Arjuna.

55 O rājā! Tumburu
and other gandharvas,
gandharvas descended
from Prādhā and other munis,
and the apsarās
supported Arjuna.

56 The celestial messengers
of pure apsarās,
the Guhyakas,
and all mind-enchanting sacred fragrances
supported diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

57 And all the odours
displeasing to the mind
took the side of Karṇa.
The dreadful feelings
that haunt creatures
facing calamity,

58 The feeling that enters
the mind
of a dying man –
the negative feelings
that take over
when doom is near, –

59 These feelings entered
the mind
of the charioteer's son Karṇa.
Virility, radiance,
excellence, joy,
truth, valour,

60 Calm of mind, victory,
the bliss of ānanda,
O finest of kings,
O tiger-among-men, –
on the battlefield
these entered,

61 With auspicious intent,
victory-seeking
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna.
Ṛṣis and Brahmins
praised diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

62 Gods, Siddhas and Cāraṇas,
O mahārāja,
were unanimous
in taking
the side of finest-of-men
Krishna and Arjuna.

63 All of them turned up
to witness,
in varied and wonderful vehicles
the chariot-duel
between Karṇa
and Pārtha-Arjuna.

64 Īhā-creatures, birds,
elephants, horses,
chariots, foot-soldiers,
and highly learned thinkers
arrived
on cloud-and-air-vehicles

65 To witness the battle
between Karṇa and Arjuna-
Gods, Dānava-antigods,
gandharvas,
nāgas and yakṣas
and birds,

66 Wise-in-the-Vedas
mahā-ṛṣis,
svadhā-fed pitṛs, tapasyā
and vidyā-learning,
multi-shaped, medicinal
plants and herbs –

67 All of them, mahārāja,
placed themselves
in inter-space.
Brahmā
and Brahma-ṛṣis
and all the Prajāpatis

68 And Bhava-Śiva himself
arrived there
in celestial chariots.
Seeing the two –
mahā-ātmaned Karṇa
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna –

69 Śakra-Indra announced,
"Arjuna today
will defeat Karṇa."
And Sūrya pronounced,
"Karṇa today
will defeat Arjuna.

70 My son Karṇa today
will kill Arjuna
on the battlefield."
And Indra said:
"My son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
will kill Karṇa."

71 So Vāsava-Indra and Sūrya
quarrelled.
Like both these lion-like deities,
O descendant of Bharata,
the gods and antigods
split into two camps.

72 Seeing the two mahā-ātmaned heroes,
Karṇa and Arjuna,
the gods, ṛṣis,
Cāraṇas and creatures
of all the three worlds
began to tremble.

73 All the gods
and all the creatures
shivered in fear.
Where Arjuna was,
were the gods;
where Karṇa, the antigods.

74 The two heroes
of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas –
two unrivalled chariot-leaders!
Seeing them,
the gods said to Self-Born Svayambhu
Prajāpati-Brahmā:

75 "God! Which of these two
Kaurava-Pāṇḍava heroes
will win?
We would like both
these lion-like heroes
to win!

76 *Prabhu*! Lord!
The whole world is divided
over Karṇa and Arjuna.
O Self-Born Divinity!
Tell us
who will win.

77 Tell us that both
will win!"
Maghavan-Indra *praṇāma-ed*
Pitāmaha-Brahmā;

78 Then lord-of-the-gods,
most-learned-of-the-learned
Indra said: "Bhagavān!
You had declared earlier
that both these Krishnas
will win.

79 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
That is what you said.
Namaste! Favour us!"
Brahmā and Īśāna-Śiva
together said
to the lord-of-heaven Indra:

80 "*Vijaya* means victory,
and mahā-ātmaned Arjuna
is also known as Vijaya.
Ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna
gratified Agni
in the Khāṇḍava forest,

81 And, O Śakra-Indra,
he went all the way to heaven
and helped you.
Karṇa sides
with the Dānava antigods
and deserves to be defeated.

82 When that happens,
the purpose of the gods
will also be accomplished.
O lord of the gods!
What is greater than getting
one's own work done?

83 Mahātmā Phālguna-Arjuna
always cherishes truth
and dharma.
That is why
there is no doubt
victory will be his.

84 O hundred-eyed one!
Śatalocana-Indra!
He has pleased
the bull-bannered mahātmā
Bhagavān Śiva.
Why should victory not be his?

85 The Lord of the world,
Viṣṇu himself,
is his charioteer.
He is intelligent, strong,
brave, weapons-expert,
rich in tapasyā.

86 He is mahā-energetic,
omniscient in bowcraft.
Pārtha-Arjuna
has all the guṇas.
The work he is doing
is the work of the gods.

87 What suffering the Pāṇḍavas
went through –
forest-exile and all else!
But bull-brave Arjuna
is strong in tapasyā
and fortitude.

88 With his mahātmā-power
he can alter
the course of destiny.
If he ever does that,
the whole universe
will go awry.

89 If these two bull-brave
twin Krishnas
are roused to anger,
the world will collapse,
for Krishna-and-Arjuna
are the world's creators.

90 They are the supreme
ancient ṛṣis
Nara and Nārāyaṇa,
the foe-scorchers
who rule others,
whom others cannot rule.

91 In the worlds of the gods
and humans,
there is none
like Krishna and Arjuna.
The gods, ṛṣis and Cāraṇas
in the three worlds, –

92 All the hosts of gods,
all the humans,
all creatures
are in their hands.
Their power and glory
energise the universe.

93 Let Vaikartana-Karṇa,
bull-brave Karṇa,
get the finest of the worlds;
and let victory
crown the twin-Krishnas:
Krishna and Arjuna.

94 Like Droṇa and Bhīṣma,
let Karṇa
attain the realm
of heaven,
the realm of the Vasus
and Maruts."

95 Having heard
the two gods-of-gods
Brahmā and Īśāna-Śiva,
the thousand-eyed deity
Indra said
to all the assembled creatures:

96 "You have heard
what the two Bhagavāns say
for the good of the world.
What they say will happen;
it cannot but.
Shake off your doubts."

97 O respectworthy monarch!
These words of Indra
so delighted all of them,
O rājā,
that they marvelled
and offered pūjā-respect

98 In exulting exaltation
and showered
fragrant flowers
on Krishna and Arjuna,
and sounded celestial drums
and other instruments.

99 There they stood –
the gods, Dānava-antigods,
Gandharvas and others,
eager to witness
the chariot-duel
between the two lions-among-men.

100 O rājā!
The two mahā-ātmaned heroes,
Karṇa and Arjuna,
rode in white-horsed chariots
loaded
with celestial war-equipment.

101 O descendant of Bharata!
All the world's heroes
blew their conches, one by one,
as did Arjuna,
and Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and Karṇa and Śalya.

102 And so began that fearful,
coward-terrorising battle
between the two
rancorous adversaries,
resembling that
between Śakra-Indra and Śambara.

103 Such beautiful flags fluttered
on their chariots,
it seemed both the planets
Rāhu and Ketu
had appeared in the sky
on the worlds' doomsday.

104 The elephant-rope symbol
in Karṇa's flag,
sturdy and strong and studded with gems,
lovely as a rainbow,
undulated
like a venomous snake.

105 On Pārtha-Arjuna's flag
was the open-jawed excellent ape,
fearsome
like Antaka-Yama,
as impossible to look at
as the sun.

106 The ape in the war-flag
of Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
eager for battle,
seemed suddenly
to leap out and land
on Karṇa's war-flag,

107 Like Garuda pouncing
on a *pannaga*-serpent,
and with mahā-swiftness
began clawing with nails
and ripping with teeth
the elephant-rope.

108 The elephant-rope on the flag
of Karṇa,
strong as steel
and tinkling with *kiṅkiṇi*-bells,
fearful as Kāla's noose,
struck back at the ape

109 Preceding the horrific chariot-duel
between
the two heroes,
the war-flags
of both grappled
with each other.

110 Their chariot-horses neighed
fiercely
at each other.
Lotus-eyed Krishna stared at Śalya
with raised eyebrows,
shooting arrow-glances at him.

111 Śalya reciprocated
with identical arrow-glances
at lotus-eyed Krishna,
but it was Vāsudeva-Krishna
who won
the glance-skirmish.

112 In exactly the same way,
Kuntī's son Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
defeated Karṇa.
The charioteer's son Karṇa
smiled
and said to Śalya:

113 "Śalya, tell me the truth.
If Pārtha-Arjuna
kills me
on the field of battle today,
what will
you do?"

114 Śalya replied: "Karṇa!
If white-horsed Arjuna
kills you in battle today,
I will singlehanded
in my chariot kill Mādhava-Krishna
and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna."

115 O rājā! (continued Sañjaya)
Arjuna also
asked Govinda-Krishna.
the same question.
Smiling, Krishna spoke this truth
to Pārtha-Arjuna:

116 "The sun will totter and fall,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the ocean will dry up,
and fire turn to ice,
before Karṇa
kills you.

117 If that ever happens,
the world will stop spinning.
If that happens,
I will crush
Karṇa and Śalya
with my bare hands."

118 These words of Krishna made
ape-bannered Arjuna
laugh out loud.
He said to Krishna,
who made everything
seem so easy:

119 "Janārdana-Krishna!
Punisher of people!
Leave Karṇa and Śalya to me.
Karṇa, his flag,
his charioteer Śalya,
his chariot and horses,

120 His umbrella, armour,
śakti-spear,
his bow and arrows –
today, Krishna,
I will reduce them all
to tatters.

121 Like an elephant tearing apart
trees in a forest
with his tusks,
I will reduce to pulp
his chariot, horses, *śakti*-spear,
armour and weapons.

122 O Mādhava-Krishna!
The time has come
for Rādheya-Karṇa's wives
to become widows.
Surely they have had dreams
of the impending calamity.

123 Yes, you will see
Karṇa's wives
become widows today.
I cannot control my anger –
the things he did
in the past –

124 This fool with no foresight
at all –
the filthy language he used
against Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and against us
in the sabhā . . .

125 Yes, like a musth elephant
trampling a flowering tree in a forest,
Govinda-Krishna,
I will destroy Karṇa!
You will see this happen
before your very eyes.

126 O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
You will hear
these sweet words today:
'O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
Such wonderful luck!
You have won today!'

127 Today, Janārdana-Krishna,
you wil joyfully
console Subhadra,
mother of Abhimanyu,
and Kuntī,
your father's sister.

128 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Today you wil console Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
tears stream
down whose face,
and speak nectar-sweet words
to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira."

SECTION EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 What a glorious spectacle
one saw in the sky
(continued Sañjaya):
the gods and antigods,
the Siddhas and yakṣas,
Gandharvas and rākṣasas,
Brahma-ṛṣis and rāja-ṛṣis,
and so many apsarās,
and Suparṇa-Garuḍa.

2 Such a medley of music,
so lovely, so sweet,
enchanting the sky,
the sounds of songs
and chants and hymns
and dancing and laughter –
all those on earth
looked up at the sky
with awe-struck amazement.

3 And so it began,
the battlefield slaughter
of Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas
in frenzied ecstasy
sounding their instruments,
blowing their conches,
and roaring their war-cries.
An utter cacophony
of reverberating noise!

4 Blood on the field
littered with corpses
and the glittering hosts
of elephants and horses
and chariots and foot-soldiers,
and arrows and swords
and *śakti*-spears
and *ṛṣṭi*-swords
and many other weapons.

5 What a battle they fought –
the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas–
like the clash in the past
between the gods and antigods.
When the tumultuous clashes
between Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Karṇa the son
of Adhiratha began,
the arrows they shot –

6 Exceedingly sharp arrows –
shrouded them both,
and darkened the sky,
and blurred the armies.
And when your warriors
and the enemy warriors
were so encompassed
with darkness that they
could see nothing,

7 Then fear took hold of them,
and they ran for shelter
to Arjuna or Karṇa –
an incredible sight
all over the field.
East-wind and west-wind
clashing and collapsing –
likewise their weapons
clashed and crumpled.

8 And the heroes themselves
shone bright and clear
in the profound darkness,
like the sun and the moon.
Inspired by the order
"No one must retreat!"
your warriors and theirs
of the Pāṇḍava ranks
stood firm on the field,

9 And surrounded the two
mahā-chariot-heroes
like the gods and antigods
surrounding Vāsava-Indra
and the antigod Śambara.
The two finest-among-men
were praised with the beating
of *mṛdaṅga* and *bheri*
and *paṇava* and *ānaka* drums –

10 The two bull-brave heroes
shone like the sun
and the moon refulgent
through thundering clouds.
With mahā-bows stretched
in full maṇḍala-circles,
they stood there like two suns
emitting flaming arrows
like thousands of rays,

11 Like two intolerable suns
at the end of a yuga.
incinerating the world's
moving and unmoving life.
Invincible, both of them.
Foe-destroyers, both of them.
Absolute experts in weapons,
both of them. Both of them,
dedicated to kill each other.

12 In that mahā-battle,
Karṇa and Pāṇḍava-Arjuna
faced each other like
the antigod Jambha
and Mahendra-Indra.
With their mahā-weapons,
those two mahā-bowmen,
shooting innumerable
fatal arrows,

13 Slaughtering men
and horses and elephants –
two mahā-chariot-heroes
wounding each other too
on that battlefield, O king.
Afflicted by those two
finest-of-men,
Karṇa and Arjuna,
the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava

14 Elephants and foot-soldiers
and horses and chariots
fled helter-skelter
in all the ten directions,
like deer chased by a lion.
Then Duryodhana,
the Bhoja king Kṛtavarman,
Subala's son Śakuni,
Śāradvata-Kṛpa, Karṇa –

15 These five mahā-chariot-heroes
attacked Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Acyuta-Krishna
and wounded them with flesh-
lacerating arrows.
Their bows and quivers,
war-flags and horses,
chariots and charioteers –
with his arrows Arjuna

16 Destroyed all of them,
and checked their advance.
He also blocked
the charioteer's son Karṇa
with twelve arrows.
Hundreds of chariots
and hundreds of elephants
rushed upon Arjuna,
determined to kill him,

17 Including the finest
of Śaka and Tuṣāra
and Yavana and Kāmboja
cavalry. But with hand-
weapons and razor-arrows
their offensive was blocked,
their magnificent weapons
shattered, their heads sliced
on the battlefield

18 By Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
and the horses and chariots
and elephants destroyed –
a complete annihilation!
And then, in inter-space,
rose peals of applause
as well as drumbeats of joy
from the gods: *"Sādhu! Sādhu!*
"Excellent! Excellent!"

19 And a soft wind blew
and a shower of flowers
fell on the field
filling the world
with fragrance; and gods
humans and everyone,
witnessing the wonder,
stood there and marvelled,
stood there and marvelled.

20 All, that is, except
your son Duryodhana
and the charioteer's son
Karṇa – both one-minded,
both unimpressed.
Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
took your son Duryodhana's
hand in his own,
pressed it consolingly,

21 And said: "Duryodhana!
Be patient, be calm.
Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.
Dhik on this hatred!
Shame on these quarrels!
Your mahā-arms-expert
guru Droṇa, Brahmā-like Droṇa,
is dead. So is Bhīṣma
and many mahā-chariot-heroes.

22 I cannot be killed,
nor Kṛpa, my maternal uncle.
Rule the kingdom
jointly with the Pāṇḍavas.
I will persuade
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
now to be calm; he will listen.
As for Janārdana-Krishna –
he abhors such hatreds.

23 And Yudhiṣṭhira desires
the good of all.
Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-
Bhīma and the twins
will listen to him.
If you make peace
with Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons,
the welfare of your subjects
will be assured.

24 Your royal relatives
will return to their capitals,
the soldiers of the armies
will be disbanded,
the war will be ended.
O lord of men!
If you refuse to listen,
be prepared for defeat,
and ready to repent.

25 Because he feels for his father
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, old in years,
and illustrious mother Gāndhārī,
compassionate Dharmarāja
will agree to the peace.

26 Because he is learned-in-the śāstras,
generous, noble-minded, patient,
he will let you decide
your fair share of the kingdom.

27 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
will be happy
to see the end of this
family bitterness.
And Krishna too desires
such reconciliation.

28 Bhīma and Arjuna
and the twin sons
of Mādrī and Pāṇḍu
follow the advice
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
and wise Yudhiṣṭhira;

29 Those tigers-among-men
will respect
whatever they say.
Save yourself, Duryodhana.
Only oneself
can save oneself.

30 Do what's good for you.
It's only the living
who enjoy prosperity.
Bhadraṁ te!
May you prosper!
I know you will.

31 O Kaurava descendant!
If you are dead,
what use is a kingdom,
where's the happiness?
O Bharata descendant!
Face the truth.

32 Make peace with the Pāṇḍavas.
Cherish the glory
of the Kaurava dynasty.
O Kaurava descendant!
May I never have to speak
ill of you!

33 O mahā-muscled one!
Do not ignore
what I have to say.
What I say is full of dharma
for the welfare
of rājās and royal families.

34 I am deeply concerned
about the glory
of the Kaurava dynasty.
O son of Gāndhārī!
What I say is for the good
of the people,

35 For the family's happiness.
I am convinced
that tiger-among-men Arjuna
can never
be defeated in battle
by Karṇa,

36 Which is why,
O finest-among-men,
my words should please you.
O Indra-among-rājās!
The alternative can only
be a mahā-calamity!

37 You have witnessed
what diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna did –
not Bala-slayer Indra,
not Antaka-Yama,
not the Bhagavān Creator,
nor the Yakṣa-rājā
can equal that.

38 All-guṇa-possessing Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
will not refuse to listen to me.
O Indra-among-rājās! Calm yourself.
He will surely go along with you.

39 Always have I
respected you.
We are very good friends.
Which is why I present
this proposal to you.
If it pleases you
to accept my plan,
I will go to Karṇa
and convince him too.

40 To learned have said
there are four kinds of friends:
those who are born friends;
those who are made friends
with sweet behaviour;
those whose friendship
is bought with money;
those who become friends
with the famous and powerful.
The Pāṇḍavas can be all of these.

41 They are your relatives,
born friends, as it were.
O lord, O brave one,
by making peace with them,
you make them friends too.
If you do this happily,
the friendship will deepen
and the entire world
will be benefited."

42 Listening to these words
of his friend Aśvatthāman,
Duryodhana pondered
for a while; sighing deeply,
troubled in mind, he said:
"My dear friend, my *sakhā*,
you have had your say.
What you say is right.
But listen to me.

43 You heard the words
of wicked-minded Bhīma
when roaring like a lion
he butchered Duḥśāsana.
They rankle in my heart,
the words of that wolf-
waisted Vṛkodara.
In such circumstances,
how can there be peace?

44 There's no wind so strong
that dares to dislodge
the mahā-mountain Meru.
So I say Arjuna
is no match for Karṇa.
Besides, the Pāṇḍavas
will never trust me;
too many are the insults
I have heaped on them.

45 O my guru's son!
O upholder of dignity!
It is not right for you
to persuade Karṇa
to refrain from battle.
Phālguṇa-Arjuna
is mahā-tired and vulnerable.
Now is the right time
for Karṇa to kill him."

46 Persuading Aśvatthāman
with these gentle words
spoken convincingly,
your son Duryodhana
ordered his soldiers:
"What's wrong with you?
Move! Ready your bows!
Swoop on the enemy –
and kill them all!"

SECTION EIGHTY-NINE

1 O rājā! (said Sañjaya)
Thanks to the ill advice
of your son Duryodhana,
to the blare of conches
and beating of bheri-drums
the two tigers-among-men,
two white-horsed heroes,
Vaikartana-Karṇa and Arjuna
confronted each other.

2 They shone on the field
like two sacred fires
fed on ghee-libations.
The illustrious heroes
appeared on the field
like two venomous snakes
hissing and spitting
mutual hatred.

3 Like two rutting elephants
from the Himālayas
fearfully clashing
over a she-elephant,
goring each other
with giant tusks,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Ādhiratha-Karṇa
confronted each other.

4 Like one cloud-mass,
driven by fate,
striking another cloud-mass,
like one mountain
colliding with another,
they clashed, these two,
to the noise of twanging
bowstrings and handclaps
and rattle of chariot-wheels.

5 Like two massive mountains
bristling with peaks
and trees and clusters
of creepers and plants
and streams and cataracts,
Karṇa and Arjuna,
two mahā-powerful heroes,
bristling with weapons,
attacked each other.

6 What a mahā-clash! –
like that in the past
between the lord-god Indra
and Virocana's son Bali.
Bodies bloodied with arrows,
charioteers and horses
lacerated, streams of blood
trickling – a spectacle
unbelievable, unendurable.

7 Like two large lakes
filled with lotus-and-lily-
and-fish-and-tortoises,
lashed by a storm,
overflowing and mingling,
the chariots of the heroes
Karṇa and Arjuna,
fluttering with war-flags,
rushed at each other.

8 Like Mahendra-Indra
were they, those two
mahā-chariot-heroes,
in valiant achievement.
With arrows as deadly
as Indra's thunderbolt,
they attacked each other,
like Mahendra-Indra pitted
against the antigod Vṛtra.

9 Resplendent with armour,
ornaments and uniforms
and weapons, the armies
on the field of battle –
elephants and horses
and chariots and foot-soldiers –
marvelled, seeing Karṇa
and Arjuna, and the gods too
marvelled and trembled.

10 When like a musth elephant
attacking another,
Arjuna attacked the son
of Adhiratha, Karṇa,
determined to kill him,
all who were watching
roared their war-cries,
raised their hands in joy,
and flapped their dresses.

11 When, on that afternoon,
in that mahā-clash
Arjuna attacked the son
of the charioteer, Karṇa,
the Kauravas and Somakas
shouted fiercely.
The two chariots clashed.
The field became a swamp
of blood and marrow.

12 Rushing forward, the Somakas
again and again
incited Pārtha-Arjuna:
"Go forward, Arjuna!
Kill Karṇa today!
Do not delay!
Slice his head, and slice
Duryodhana's dream
of becoming comperor!"

13 And then, from our side
our warriors shouted,
encouraging the others:
"Advance, Karṇa!
Attack! Kill Arjuna
with your sharp arrows!
And pack off the Pāṇḍavas
once again to the forest –
this time for good!"

14 And so Karṇa
attacked Arjuna
with ten mahā-arrows
which temporarily
bewildered Arjuna.
But Arjuna smiled
and retaliated with twelve
shafts that struck
the chest of Karṇa.

15 Arjuna and the son
of a charioteer, Karṇa,
commenced a duel
of mutual mutilation
with volley upon volley
of lovely-feathered arrows.
A terrifying duel –
with each hero bent
on destroying his opponent.

16 Wonderful wielder-of-
the-grand-Gāṇḍīva,
Arjuna rubbed his arms
and ran his fingers
on the Gāṇḍīva's bowstring,
and discharged volleys
of *nārāca, nālīka,*
boar-eared, razor, *añjali*
and half-moon arrows.

17 O rājā! The arrows
of Arjuna penetrated
the chariot of Karṇa
from all sides, as it were –
like homing birds
at day-end, returning,
beaks pointed downward,
swiftly, in swarms,
to their nests in a tree.

18 All the arrows, O rājā,
that Arjuna, with brow
furrowed in concentration,
discharged at Karṇa
on the field of battle
were absorbed or repulsed
or instantly shattered
by the counter-arrows
of the charioteer's son Karṇa.

19 Mahendra-Indra's son
Arjuna then decided
to target Karṇa
with the Āgneya-missile.
The dazzle of that missile
illuminated the earth,
the inter-space,
the ten directions,
even the course of the sun.

20 Their uniforms ablaze,
the soldiers panicked
and fled the field.
Their screams and groans
and agonised shrieks
were like the exploding
crackling noises heard
in a forest when thick
bamboo clumps catch fire.

21 The charioteer's son,
valiant Karṇa,
seeing the Āgneya-missile
streaking incandescent
on the field of battle,
released his own
counter-missile Vāruṇa
which swiftly extinguished
the fast-spreading flames.

22 And suddenly the sky
was swarming with blobs
of thick black clouds
blanketing the earth
with total darkness.
The horizon was obscured
with mountainous clouds
from which torrents of rain
drenched the earth.

23 The raging conflagration,
billowing and consuming
and growing and spreading,
was, as I said,
extinguished by the rain
that poured from the clouds.
It seemed that the sky
and the ten directions
were one massive blackness.

24 Under that vast blackness
of sky and horizon
and the ten directions,
nothing was visible.
Scattering the clouds
created by Karṇa
on the field of battle
with his celestial weapon
the Vāyavya-missile,

25 Terror-of-his-foes
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
charged with mantras
his Gāṇḍīva-bow,
his bowstring
and his arrows,
and readied the favourite
Vajra-thunderbolt weapon
of Deva-rāja Indra.

26 From the Gāṇḍīva,
with thunderbolt ferocity,
sped thousands of arrows –
razor-sharp *kṣuras*,
mouse-like *añjalīkas*,
half-moon *ardhacandras*,
iron-crafted *nārācas*,
lotus-smooth *nālīkas*,
boar-eared *varāha-karṇas*.

27 These mahā-effective arrows,
vulture-feather-decorated,
super-sharp, swift-speeding,
whizzed towards the chariot
of Karṇa, and plunged
into his limbs, his horses,
hiw bow, the axle-joints,
the chariot-wheels
and the war-flag.

28 Like swarms of serpents,
terrified by an attack
of Tārkṣya-Garuḍa,
slithering inside the earth,
the arrows slid
inside their targets.
The body of Karṇa
was awash with blood.
His eyes rolled in anger.

29 Mahātmā Karṇa readied
his strong-stringed bow,
bending it full taut,
and with his Bhārgava
ocean-rumbling missile
he disintegrated
all the arrows that sped
from the Mahendra-Indra-
missile of Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

30 With his missile he destroyed
his enemy's missile,
and countless chariots,
elephants and foot-soldiers
of the Pāṇḍava.forces.
In that mahā-battle,
infuriated Karṇa demonstrated
the Bhārgava-missile's power
as equal to the Indra-missile.

31 O rājā! Braving
the arrows of Karṇa,
the Pāñcālas and Somakas
regrouped their forces
and, roused to anger,
with sharp arrows
they jointly launched
an offensive against
the charioteer's son Karṇa.

32 Bursting with anger,
the charioteer's son
Karṇa hit specially
the warriors of the Somaka
and Pāñcāla forces
with volleys of arrows
sharpened on stone
and decorated with
golden feathers.

33 When they counter-attacked,
the charioteer's son
Karṇa, supremely confident,
delighting in battle,
with volleys of arrows
pinned down the Pāñcālas'
chariots and elephants
and horses, and then
cut them to pieces.

34 Severely mutilated
by the arrows of Karṇa,
they teetered on the field
before collapsing.
They fell like a herd
of wild elephants
mauled and terror-stricken
by the depredations
of a forest lion.

35 After the slaughter, O rājā,
of the Pāñcāla forces,
rājā-of-valour Karṇa
stood on the field
of the great clash,
like a solitary
resplendent sun,
shooting a stream
of dazzling sunrays.

36 Surmising he had won,
the soldiers of your army
burst into lion-roars
of victory-celebration.
O Indra-of-the Kauravas!
They had the impression
that Karṇa had attacked
and seriously wounded
Krishna and Arjuna.

37 Witnesing the prowess
and unrepulsable valour
of mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa in destroying
the Pāñcāla forces,
and the ease with which
Karṇa neutralised
the celestial missile
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,

38 The wind-god's son
Bhīma anxiously
began rubbing his palms.
His eyes blazed
with anger. Passion
surged in his heart.
He turned to never-
failing-in-truth Arjuna,
and said:

39 "Jiṣṇu-Arjuna!
Ever-victorious one!
Tell me, how could
that scoundrelly
son of a charioteer,
that man of adharma,
kill so many excellent
Pāñcāla warriors
in front of your eyes?

40 Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna!
Even the gods failed
to defeat you. The antigod
Kālakeya failed too.
You fought Sthāṇu-Śiva!
How is it then that
you are defeated
by just ten arrows of Karṇa?

41 Strange, very strange –
all your volleys of arrows
he destroyed in a flash!
Do have the goodness
to remember the suffering
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
'You are like hollow,
impotent sesame seeds!'
Have you forgotten the words,

42 The bitter, insulting words
this wicked-minded rascal
spouted at us –
this ill-ātmaned son
of a charioteer. Ambidexterous
Savyāsacī-Arjuna!
Recall the words now –
and kill this scoundrel
called Karṇa!

43 Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna!
Why this heistation?
Why are you delaying?
What's happened to the courage
you showed in Khāṇḍava
when you gratified the hunger
of Pāvaka-Agni
and conquered all creatures?

44 Summon that courage now
and kill this son
of a charioteer – and I,
after that, will batter
him to pulp with my mace."
Vāsudeva-Krishna, too,
seeing Pārtha-Arjuna's
chariot-based arrows repulsed
by Karṇa, said:

45 "Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna!
It is unbelievable
every offensive of yours
is repulsed by Karṇa.
Why are you confused,
brave one? Can't you see
the Kauravas celebrating
with victory shouts?

46 With Karṇa leading them,
they see his missiles
disintegrating your missiles.
Yuga after yuga
you have exterminated
horrendous rākṣasas
patiently and bravely,
though they were armed
with magical weapons,

47 Among them the fierce
antigod Dambodhava.
Show the same courage now
and eliminate Karṇa.
Pluck up courage
and slice his head clean,
once and for all,
with this razor-sharp
weapon of mine,

48 The Sudarśana-*cakra*
which I now give you –
like Śakra-Indra
beheading Namuci
with his Vajra-thunderbolt.
Remember the courage
with which you faced
Bhagavān mahātmā Śiva
appearing as a hunter –

49 With the same courage now,
O hero, with the help
of your allies and relatives,
kill the charioteer's son!
And this vast sea-and-
ocean-ringed earth,
with its multitudinous
wealth of villages
and towns and cities,

50 Rid of your enemies –
restore this earth,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and bask in the glory
of victory today!"
Puissant mahātmā Arjuna
decided to kill
the charioteer's son,

51 Inspired by the words
of Janārdana-Krishna
and Bhīma. He summoned
the strength of his ātman,
he realised the reason
for his birth in this world;
he became aware
of his life's mission,
and said to Keśava-Krishna:

52 "For the good of the world,
for the death of Karṇa,
the charioteer's son,
I shall now invoke
a mahā-missile.
I need your blessing,
and the blessings of Brahmā,
Bhava-Śiva, the gods,
and all who are wise in the Vedas."

53 Addresing these words
to the deity Krishna,
infinite-ātmaned
ambidexterous Savyasācī-
Arjuna namaskāra-ed
Brahmā, whom only
the mind can know,
and readied the unrepulsable
Brāhma-missile.

54 Like a cloud pouring rain
in torrents, Karṇa
with a flood of arrows
neutralised that missile,
and shone with glory.
Seeing the missile
of diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
pulverised by Karṇa,

55 Blazing with anger,
revengeful and powerful
Bhīma then said
to firm-in-truth Arjuna:
"Everyone says
you are the expert
in the use of the mind-
inspired mahā-missile,
the Brahmāstra.

56 My ambidexterous
Savyasācī-brother!
I would suggest
that you try your hand
at some other weapon."
With fire-spitting arrows
Savyasācī-Arjuna
obscured all the directions,
major and minor,

57 Snake-venomed arrows,
horrendous and fearful,
that sped from his Gāṇḍīva
like streaking sunrays
from the orb of the sun.
A volley of ten thousand
sun-and-fire-blazing
gold-feathered arrows from
bull-brave Arjuna's bow,

58 Like the fires of dissolution
at the end of a yuga,
obscured in an instant
the chariot of Karṇa.
Hundreds of *śūla*-darts,
paraśu-hatchets,
cakra-wheel weapons
and *nārāca*-arrows
and countles other

59 Gruesome weapons
pounded on the soldiers
wreaking incalculable
havoc and destruction.
On the field of battle
could be seen, suddenly,
the head of an enemy,
chopped off, thud
and roll on the ground,

60 And, horror-stricken
at the sight, another
soldier topple and fall.
A third soldier flee
in panic. The right arm
of yet another,
stout and strong like
an elephant's trunk, severed,
still clutching its sword.

61 The lopped-off left arm
of still another,
razor-arrow-mutilated,
still clutching its shield,
lying on the ground.
And so, one by one,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
killed the enemy leaders.

62 With terrible arrows
that shredded the bodies
of enemy warriors,
Arjuna decimated
the army of Duryodhana.
And Vaikartana-Karṇa
continued to shower
the Pāṇḍava ranks
with volleys of arrows.

63 Like torrents of rain
from Parjanya-clouds,
these ceaseless arrows
fell on Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
In this way, Krishna,
diadem-decorated
heroic Kirīṭin-Arjuna,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
by illimitably powerful

64 And brutally brave Karṇa,
were targeted and wounded
with three arrows each –
after which, he raised
his mahā-roaring war-cry.
Seeing Janārdana-Krishna
and Bhīma lacerated
by Karṇa's arrows,
diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna,

65 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna,
with impatient fury,
selected eighteen arrows
from his quiver.
With one he shredded
the war-flag of Karṇa,
with four wounded Śalya,
and with three more
he injured Karṇa.

66 With the remaining ten,
he killed Sabhāpati,
a gold-armoured prince
of the Kaurava forces.
Headless, armless,
without his charioteer,
without his horses,
bow-less and flag-less,
that son of a rājā

67 Dropped from his chariot
on the field of battle,
like a śāla-tree
chopped by an axe.
Repeatedly attacking
Karṇa with three,
eight, two,
then with four arrows,
and finally with ten,

68 Arjuna massacred
four hundred elephants
and destroyed a total
of eight hundred chariots.
Wiped out next
by Arjuna were
thousands of horses
along with their riders,
thousands of foot-soldiers,

69 After which, with swift arrows
he completely shrouded
the charioteer, chariot,
and war-flag of Karṇa.
Afflicted by the offensive
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
the dispirited Kauravas
from all sides of the field
appealed to Karṇa:

70 "Shoot your arrows quickly,
O Karṇa! Stop Arjuna
before he annihilates
the Kaurava army!"
Inspired by the plea
of the Kaurava warriors,
Karṇa once again
with tremendous strength
shot volleys of arrows.

71 Dripping blood
and scattering dust,
those marrow-piercing arrows
terrorised the Pāṇḍavas
and Pāñcālas. Both
were mahā-powerful
bowmen, both were experts
in all weapons, both able
to face any enemy.

72 And so they battered
not only each other's
fearful army forces,
they also mauled and horribly
mutilated each other.
In the meantime, the arrows
plucked out, his body healed
with mantras and herbs
by expert physicians,

73 Yudhiṣṭhira, encased
in golden armour,
eagerly arrived there
to witness the battle.
All present there
were delighted to see
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
appear in person
and welcomed him fulsomely,

74 With the same delight
that everyone welcomes
the release of the moon,
emerging clear and radiant,
from the clutches of Rāhu.
Seeing the two heroes
of the opposing armies
locked in mortal combat
on the battlefield –

75 Karṇa and the son
of Pṛthā-Kuntī Arjuna –
all the spectators
on the ground, in the sky,
stood spellbound.
What a cacophony
of noise of bows
and bowstrings and handclaps
and screeching arrows

76 As Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Ādhiratha-Karṇa
confronted each other
with successive barrages
of magnificent arrows!
And then, suddenly,
because it was pulled
with excessive zeal,
Arjuna's bowstring snapped.

77 Seizing his chance,
the charioteer's son
Karṇa shot a volley
of one hundred arrows
at Pāṇḍava Arjuna.
With sixty oil-polished,
with bird-feathers fitted,
looking like snakes
with sloughed-off skins,

78 Karṇa next targeted
Vāsudeva-Krishna;
and with eight more arrows
he attacked Phālguna-Arjuna.
With ten thousand
mortifying arrows,
son-of-the-sun Karṇa
targeted the vulnerable parts
of son-of-the-wind Bhīma.

79 In addition, he targeted
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Arjuna,
Krishna, their chariot,
their war-flag, the Somakas,
and the younger brothers
of Arjuna-Like clouds
darkening the sun,
the Somakas shot arrows
to confound Karṇa,

80 But the war-weapons-
expert charioteer's son
frusirated their attempt
with a counter-volley.
Nullifying their shafts,
he retaliated
by destroying their chariots,
their cavalry,
and their war-elephants,

81 And then, O rājā,
he began a strategic
harassment of all
the prominent warriors
of the enemy forces.
Lacerated by the arrows
of Karṇa, they screamed
in agony and, one by one,
collapsed on the earth.

82 Like a pack of dogs
ripped apart
by a terrifyingly
mahā-powerful lion –
such was their fate.
Then the Pāñcālas
took up positions between
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and Karṇa;

83 But powerful Karṇa,
with deliberate delight,
wiped out all of them
with well-aimed shafts.
It was then that your soldiers,
seeing the annihilation
of the Pāñcālas, celebrated
by lion-roars of victory
and loud hand-clapping.

84 They all had one thought
in their minds:
"Krishna and Arjuna
are in Karṇa's control."
Though badly lacerated
by the arrows
of Adhiratha's son Karṇa,
Arjuna speedily
pulled taut his bowstring,

85 And began neutralising
the showers of arrows
shot by Karṇa.
Pārtha-Arjuna prevented
any further advance
by the Kauravas.
Ripping Karṇa's finger-guard,
creating total darkness
with swarms of arrows,

86 Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
harassed Karṇa and Śalya
and the hosts of Kauravas.
Such a darkness it was,
the one created
by Arjuna's mahā-weapons,
that even the birds
could not fly in the sky.

87 And then, suddenly,
from inter-space, as it were,
a divine, scented breeze
wafted on the battlefield.
Pārtha-Arjuna smiled,
and with ten arrows
he sliced the armour
of Śalya
and grievously wounded him.

88 With twelve accurately
aimed arrows wounding Karṇa,
he attacked
with another seven.
The fierce winged shafts
of Pārtha-Arjuna
pierced Karṇa so deeply
that his entire body
streamed with blood.

89 He was bathed in blood.
On the field of battle
Karṇa was like
Rudra-Śiva himself
sporting and dancing
in a cremation ground
at the inauspicious time
of death and destruction –
the Rudra-*muhūrta*.

90 Adhiratha's son Karṇa
with three arrows afflicted
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
who shone with the glory
of lord-of-heaven Indra,
and shot five flaming
snake-like arrows
with intent to kill
Acyuta-Krishna.

91 Those perfectly aimed
gold-filigreed arrows
sliced through the armour
of finest-of-men
Puruṣottama-Krishna,
slid into the earth and,
purified by the waters
of Pātāla-gaṅgā,
they returned to Karṇa.

92 Not arrows, but five snakes
were they, allies of
Takṣaka's son Aśvasena
(whose mother was killed
by Arjuna at Khāṇḍava).
With ten *bhalla*-arrows
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
intercepted and cut them
into three pieces each.

93 When he saw the body
of Krishna pierced
by all those arrows
shot by Karṇa,
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
blazed up in anger
like dry grass bursting
into sudden flame.

94 Pulling his bowstring
up to his ear,
he riddled Karṇa's
vulnerable parts
with fatal flaming arrows.
In agonising pain,
Karṇa stood straight,
summoning his courage,
trusting the gods.

95 Then, O rājā,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
discharged such a swarm
of arrows that the ten
directions and sub-directions,
the radiance of the sun,
the chariot of Karṇa
became hazy, hidden,
as it were, in a mist.

96 The chariot-protectors,
the protectors
of both wings,
the protectors
of the front and the rear
of the Kaurava army,
who under orders
from Duryodhana
were performing their duty –

97 All two thousand of them –
with their chariots
and horses and charioteers,
O rājā, were exterminated
in a flash
by that one-of-a-kind
foe-destroying hero,
ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna.

98 Those who somehow survived
abandoned your son
and the Kauravas
led by Karṇa – and fled.
They fled, all of them,
forsaking on the field
the arrow-stricken dead
and dying, son forsaking
father; father, son.

99 Mauled and mutilated
by the arrows
of Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
they fled the field.
Suyodhana-Duryodhana
ordered the finest
among them to rally
and re-group again
around Karṇa's chariot.

100 "O Kṣatriyas!" exclaimed
Duryodhana. "Heroes!
Heroes all of you!
All of you dedicated
to Kṣatriya-dharma!
It is wrong of you –
it is wrong
of you now
to forsake Karṇa!"

101 It did not work
(continued Sañjaya).
The words of your son
failed to stop them.
Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows
had devastated them.
Pale with fear, they hid
in the nooks and corners
of the ten directions.

102 O Bharata descendant!
Karṇa, all alone,
everywhere abandoned,
did not lose heart,
did not fear. Deserted
by the Kauravas,
he recovered his courage
and confidently proceeded
to attack Arjuna.

SECTION NINETY

1 The Kaurava forces,
utterly routed
(continued Sañjaya),
fled to a distance
out of reach of arrows,
and from there they saw
the missile of Arjuna
flashing like lightning
all over the field.

2 Whichever the missile
that Arjuna in anger
swiftly and fiercely
shot with the aim
of killing Karṇa,
was intercepted mid-air
and destroyed by the fierce
counter-arrows of Karṇa
on the mahā-battlefield.

3 Invulnerable the bow
of Karṇa and tremendously
strong its bowstring.
With his gold-feathered arrows
Karṇa intercepted
all the missiles discharged
by Arjuna, the terroriser
and consumer of Kauravas,
and pulverised them.

4 With his mahā-potent
Ātharvan missile,
obtained by the grace
of Paraśurāma himself,
mahātmā Karṇa
succeeded in shattering
with sharp arrows
the Kaurava-consuming
missile of Arjuna.

5 What a more-than-mahā
was the battle that raged
between Adhiratha's son
and Arjuna, O rājā!
What a mahā-battle
of crashing arrows!
Like a head-on clash
between two elephants
with fearsome tusks.

6 O rājā! Everything,
everywhere, all the points
of the horizon were nothing
but a mass of arrows
upon arrows upon arrows.
Karṇa and Arjuna,
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
blotted the sky
with a canopy of arrows.

7 The Kauravas and Somakas
saw a thick mahā-net
of arrows with no limit
spreading everywhere.
In that coagulated
arrow-swarming darkness,
pitch-black darkness,
no living creature
was visible to another.

8 O rājā! Those two
bravest of the brave,
the most brilliant
of all brilliant bowmen,
abardoning all fear
of personal safety,
risking their lives,
became to their enemies
truly invincible.

9 Seeing those two heroes
manoeuvring on the field
to obtain an advantage
of each other's weakness,
the gods and the ṛṣis,
the gandarvas and Yakṣas,
and the *pitṛ*-ancestors
marvelled and burst
into spontaneous applause.

10 What a wonderful
display of feats
was witnessed, O rājā,
when those two best
of brilliant bowmen
discharged on the field
a welter of arrows
one after another
upon each other!

11 So it was that sometimes,
in excellence of valour,
in missile-manipulation,
in māyā-magic tactics,
on the field of battle,
the charioteer's son
did better, and sometimes
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

12 Spellbound they stood,
the warriors of both armies,
seeing the two heroes,
resolute and formidable,
battling each other
in a brutal combat
that kept wavering
this way or other
on the field of battle.

13 O Indra-among-men!
The beings who observed
this battle between Karṇa
and Pārtha-Arjuna
from the vantage of inter-space
of sky and heaven
shouted: "*Bho*! Karṇa!
Sādhu! Arjuna!
Excellent! Excellent!"

14 Even as that battle
raged violently,
and the colossal slaughter
continued of chariots
and horses and elephants,
the nāga-serpent Aśvasena,
lurking in the underworld
realm of Pātāla,
bitter enemy of Arjuna

15 After escaping, O rājā,
from the all-incinerating
Khāndava forest-fire
and nursing his anger
in the womb of earth –
seeing Karṇa and Arjuna
battling, gifted with power
to fly, he suddenly
swooped out of the earth.

16 O rājā! Believing
the time ripe for revenge
against the ill-ātmaned
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
quickly assuming
the shape of an arrow,
the nāga Aśvasena
slithered inside
the quiver of Karṇa.

17 Showers upon showers
of arrows were shot
with such intensity
on the field of battle
that the sky appeared
to be a mass
of fast-flying filaments;
with no sliver of space
between one filament and another.

18 That arrow-net,
that mahā-arrow-net
of limitless dimensions
so awed the Kauravas
and Somakas that all
of them trembled.
So thick that arrow-
darkness that nothing
could slip through it.

19 Not fearing for their lives,
the two tigers-among-men,
world-celebrated bowmen
Karṇa and Arjuna
fought on and on
till utterly exhausted.
Sprinkling the two heroes
with water scented
with sandalpaste fragrance,

20 Hosts of apsarās
stationed in the sky
soothed the herores
with celestial, chowrie-fans.
Then, Śakra. Indra
and the sun-god Surya
caressed the faces
of Karṇa and Arjuna
with their lotus-hands.

21 When Karṇa realised
he could not excel
Pārtha-Arjuna, so slashed
was his body with the arrows
of Arjuna, he decided
this was the time
to employ the special
snake-mouthed arrow
he preserved in his quiver.

22 That super-charged arrow
that Karṇa had reserved
specifically to kill
Arjuna, that fierce knotted
incandescent shaft,
that foe-killing sharp
snake-mouthed arrow,
concealed so long,
for one purpose only,

23 Inside his quiver of gold,
sprinkled with sandal-
paste powder –
pulling his bowstring
to the full, Karṇa fitted
that shaft to which
he daily offered profound
reverence, and aimed it
at Pārtha-Arjuna.

24 The arrow of Karṇa,
targeted to sever
the head of ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna
was none other than
Aśvasena of the Airāvata
serpent-race. It illumined
the sky and the directions
like hundreds of meteors.

25 No sooner had the serpent
entered the bow
than the Lokapāla guardians
and Śakra-Indra himself
lamented: “Hai! Hai!”
But the charioteer’s son
was unaware that the nāga
had infused the arrow
by the power of yoga.

26 Śata-daśa-nayana
thousand-eyed Indra
saw the snake in the arrow,
and said to himself:
“My son will surely die.”
Lotus-born, noble-thinking,
self-controlled Brahmā
said: “Do not worry.
Jaya-Arjuna will win.”

27 Seeing Karṇa aiming
that terrifying arrow,
the mahātmā rājā
of Madra, Śalya, said:
“Aim again, Karṇa.
You are not aiming
at his neck. If you wish
to behead Arjuna,
aim accurately.

28 When he heard this advice
from the ruler of Madra,
the eyes of the son
of a charioteer, Karṇa,
reddened with anger.
"Never does Karṇa
aim twice, O Śalya.
Warriors like me
do not cheat in battle."

29 Respected with pūjā
over so many years,
that arrow sped
straight towards its target,
and Karṇa shouted
at the top of his voice:
"It is over,
Phālguna-Arjuna!
You are going to die."

30 That incandescent arrow,
gory and gruesome,
shot from the bow
pulled taut by the arms
of Karṇa, blazed
through the sky
like fire, like the sun,
like the centre parting
in a woman's hair.

31 What a lovely līlā
then Mādhava-Krishna
displayed on the field
when he saw the arrow
flaming towards them.
With his feet he pressed
just a little the wheels
of that excellent chariot
into the ground.

32 And the gold-caparisoned
milk-white horses,
shining with the radiance
of silvery moonbeams,
bent their knees
till they touched the ground.
From the sky came shouts
of praise and pūjā
for Madhusūdana-Krishna.

33 Lion-roars of victory
and celestial applause
and a shower of flowers
from the realm of heaven
celebrating the feat
of Madhusūdana-Krishna
when the wheels of the chariot
embedded themselves
just a little in the ground.

34 With the chariot thus lowered,
the snake-mouthed arrow
gifted by Indra
whizzed towards its target
and struck the diadem
of intelligent Arjuna –
a diadem whose fame
was a byword on earth,
in interspace and heaven.

35 Taking full advantage
of the bow's workmanship,
his excellent training,
and his proud anger,
the charioteer's son Karṇa shot
the gold-and-pearl-and-
gem-and-diamond-studded
sun-and-moon-and-fire-flaming
diadem
from Arjuna's head to the ground.

36 The handiwork of self-born
Svayambhu-Brahmā
with skill and tapasyā
and gifted by him
to Puraṁdara-Indra;
mahā-priceless,
fearful for foes,
favouring its wearer,
supremely fragrant;

37 Given by the lord
of the gods Indra happily
to Arjuna for the destruction
of the enemies of the gods;
a diadem invulnerable
to Hara-Śiva's trident,
Ambupā-Varuṇa's noose,
Khaṇḍala-Indra's thunderbolt,
Vitta-gopta-Kubera's arrows; –

38 This divine diadem
was the one that Vṛṣa-Karṇa
dislodged and toppled
from the head of Arjuna
with his snake-arrow.
The incredibly wonderful
diadem of Arjuna,
by the illwill-harbouring,
wicked-vowed nāga-

39 Snake was on the field
toppled – that priceless,
gold-decorated crown
that adorned the head
of Pārtha-Arjuna.
That gold-filigreed crown
of flaming splendour
thudded on the ground
with a deafening crash.

40 Like the blood-red maṇḍala
of the setting sun
in the Asta hills
suddenly sinking, it fell,
stung with the venom
of the nāga-serpent,
the blazing and beautiful
and beloved diadem
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

41 That nāga-serpent
toppled the many-gem-studded
diadem of Arjuna
with stupendous force,
like the *vajra*-thunderbolt
of Mahendra-Indra
splintering a tree-and-
creeper-and-flower-lovely
summit of a mountain.

42 O descendant of Bharata!
Like the earth and the sky
and heaven and the ocean
reverberating with the noise
of a raging storm,
the creatures of the world
shook with the impact
of the diadem's demise,
and stumbled and fell.

43 But Pārtha-Arjuna
remained untroubled;
young and dark-skinned,
he looked like a towering
peak of the Nīlagiris.
He stood in the chariot
and tied his hair neatly
with a strip of white cloth,
and prepared to fight.
With that cloth round his head,
he looked like a mountain
illumined by the rays
of the dawning sun.

44 She was called Gaukarṇā
 the "Eye-Eared One"
because she saw with her ears;
 she was Sumukhī
the "Mouth-Protectress"
 because she protected her son
Takṣaka with her fangs;
 she was the spirit
of Takṣaka's mother
 who entered the arrow of Karṇa
and shattered Arjuna's diadem
 that shone like the sun.
By not letting the she-snake
 attack a second time,
Arjuna saved himself from death.

45 The priceless fire-and-
 sun-dazzling arrow
 shot by Karṇa
was indeed a mahā-serpent
 fiercely inimical
 to Arjuna.
Demolishing the diadem
 of Arjuna,
 it slithered away.

46 That diadem of Arjuna –
 what a splendour
 of flaming glory
it emitted as it crashed!
 The snake sped
 to the quiver of Karṇa
and before re-entering
 the quiver, said
 to the charioteer's son:

47 "You did not aim straight,
Karṇa, when you shot me.
Which is why I could not
sever the head of Arjuna.
Shoot me again,
and aim well this time.
He is your enemy.
And my enemy too.
I will kill him."

48 The charioteer's son
asked the nāga-serpetn:
"Who are you,
so fearful-looking? Tell me."
The nāga-serpent replied:
"Know me as one
who hates Pārtha-Arjuna.
He is the man
who killed my mother.

49 Even if thunderbolt-wielding
Indra tries, he cannot
stop me from sending
Arjuna to the kingdom
of his *pitṛ*-ancestors."
"Nāga!" said Karṇa.
"Karṇa is not one
who needs another's help.
He can win on his own.

50 Listen to me, nāga!
Even if it could kill
a hundred Arjunas,
I will not shoot
the same arrow twice."
The incomparable
son of the sun, Karṇa
said to the naga-rājā
on the field of battle:

51 "I have many other
splendid weapons.
I have enough confidence
I can kill Pārtha-Arjuna.
Be happy. You can go."
Inflamed by these words
of Karṇa, the nagārāja,
unable to control
his desire for revenge.

52 On his own proceeded,
O rājā, reverting
to his snake-form,
to kill Pārtha-Arjuna.
Turning to Pārtha-Arjuna,
Krishna advised:
"This mahā-serpent
is your enemy.
You must kill him."

53 When he heard these words
of Madhusūdana-Krishna,
Gāṇḍīva-wielding
and foe-confronting Arjuna
asked: "Who is this
nagā-serpent who comes
towards me? It looks
as if he wishes to enter
the mouth of Garuḍa."

54 "When you, bow in hand,"
replied Krishna,
"were busy gratifying
Citrabhānu-Agni
in the forest of Khāṇḍava,
he was fleeing, protected
by his mother, whom you killed
by mistake, thinking the two
to be one snake.

55 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
He has not forgotten.
Seeking his revenge,
he is speeding towards you,
hoping to kill you.
Look, O foe-cursher!
See how that serpent
plummets from the sky
like a fiery meteor!"

56 As he sped through the sky
(Sañjaya continued),
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna turned
and with six sharp arrows
ferociously sliced
the flying serpent.
The severed parts
of the serpent's body
fell on the field.

57 O earth-lord! As soon as
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
had sliced the serpent,
Puruṣottama-Krishna
stepped out of the chariot
and with both arms
lifted the embedded wheels
out of the ground.

58 Seizing this opportunity,
bravest-of-brave
heroes Karṇa
targeted and wounded
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
with ten arrows
specially sharpened on stone
and ornamented
with peacock-feathers.

59 Arjuna retaliated
with twelve sharp
boar-eared arrows
that wounded Karṇa,
and added to these
a *nārāca*-shaft
swift and snake-venomous,
which he released
from a bow pulled ear-taut.

60 That arrow sped straight
and sliced through the armour
of Karṇa, as if
sipping his life-blood,
after which it slid
in the earth's bowels.
The feathers of that arrow
as it slid inside the earth
were red with blood.

61 Smarting like a mahā-snake
struck with a stick,
rancorous with rage
at the wounds inflicted
by Arjuna's arrow,
Karṇa retaliated
with a volley of arrows
that sped like snakes
spitting mahā-venom.

62 Janārdana-Krishna
with twelve arrows,
Arjuna with ninety-nine –
were well-targeted
and pinned down.
Striking Pāṇḍava Arjuna
again with a fearful
mutilating shaft,
Karṇa roared and laughed.

63 It was his laughter
that infuriated Arjuna.
As valiant as Indra,
and knowing the vulnerable
parts of Karṇa,
with more than a hundred
arrows, he struck Karṇa
like Mahendra-Indra
striking the antigod Bala.

64 Arjuna's turn next
to target Karṇa
with ninety arrows
as deadly as the rod
of Antaka-Yama.
They riddled his body,
and he stood on the field
like a mountain peak
hit by a thunderbolt.

65 The gem-and-diamond-and-
gold-ornamented crown
of Karṇa,
the glittering flesh-earrings
of Karṇa –
all of them
were shredded and destroyed
by the arrows
of Arjuna.

66 The wonderful armour
of Karṇa, the priceless
handiwork of so many
of the finest artisans,
an artefact
of prolonged craftsmanship,
was infinitesimally
disintegrated
by Arjuna's arrows.

67 His anger unabated,
Arjuna pressed his advantage
by harassing Karṇa
with four sharp arrows.
Armour-less Karṇa
shivered like a patient
suffering an attack
of bile and wind
and phlegm and fever.

68 But Arjuna continued
to stretch his mahā-bow
to a maṇḍala-circle
with a combination
of skill and effort and strength,
shooting arrays of arrows
that pierced the vulnerable
parts of Karṇa
and incapacitated him.

69 Mutilated by the sharp,
swift and fearful
arrows of Arjuna,
his body streaming blood,
Karṇa on the field
looked like a red chalk hill
of varied minerals
dripping crimson liquid
in the rainy season.

70 Then, with gold-feathered
sturdy iron arrows
like the rod of Yama,
like the flames of Agni,
Arjuna penetrated
the chest of Karṇa,
like the war-god
Agni's son Kārtikeya
slicing Krauñca hill.

71 *Prabhu*! Lord!
Grievously wounded,
Karṇa discarded his quiver
and his bow that resembled
the bow of Śakra-Indra,
and slumped in his chariot.
His head was swirling.
He was in deep pain.
His hands were limp.

72 Āryan-principled,
a man of honour,
firm in manly vows,
Arjuna would not kill
Karṇa who was helpless.
Indra's younger brother
Krishna said quickly:
"Pāṇḍu's son!
You look confused.

73 The wise never let slip
the chance to kill
a helpless enemy.
Specially by killing
an enemy in distress
a paṇḍita acquires
both
dharma
and fame.

74 Lose no time. Eliminate
valiant Karṇa,
your implacable enemy,
a hero who is
second to none.
Kill him
before he attacks again.
Kill him, like
Hari-Indra killing Namuci."

75 "So be it then!"
exclaimed the finest-
of-Kaurava-heroes Arjuna.
Offering pūjā-respect
to Janārdana-Krishna,
he persecuted Karṇa
with sharp arrows,
like Śambara's enemy Indra
attacking Bali.

76 O descendant of Bharata!
Diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
rained calf-toothed arrows
on Karṇa. Then,
with all his strength,
shooting gold-feathered arrows,
he darkened all
the ten directions.

77 The broad and strong-
chested body
of Adhiratha's son Karṇa,
pierced with innumerable
calf-toothed arrows,
glowed like a hill
covered with a wealth
of blossoming aśoka, *palāśa*,
śalmali and sandalwood.

78 O lord of the world!
With all those arrows
sticking in his body,
Karṇa dazzled
on the field of battle
like an Indra-among-hills
bursting with the beauty
of entire forests
of blossoming *karṇikāras.*

79 Yet Karṇa continued
to target his enemies
with shower upon shower
of arrows. Like the maṇḍala
of the sun setting
in the Asta hills,
he stood there, shooting
blood-red arrows
like the sun's last rays.

80 But even as those arrows
sped through the sky
like mahā-serpents,
blazing arrows discharged
by muscular arms,
Arjuna's sharp arrows
intercepted them mid-air,
scattered and destroyed
them in all directions.

81 Recovering his poise,
Karṇa let loose
a swarm of furious
snake-like arrows.
With ten such arrows
he pinned down
Pārtha-Arjuna;
with six more,
he pinned down Krishna.

82 It was then mahā-minded
diadem-decorated
Kirīṭin-Arjuna
decided to employ
the Raudra mahā-missile
in that mahā-clash –
a fearfully noisy,
snake-venomed, fire-bright,
iron-fabricated weapon.

83 O king! The Spirit
of Cosmic Time, Kāla,
because the hour
of the death of Karṇa
had come, referring
to the words
of the angry Brahmin, said:
"The earth is swallowing
the wheel of your chariot."

84 O most heroic of men!
The hour of the death
of Karṇa had come.
He could not remember
the missile he was given
by the mahātmā Bhārgava
descendant Paraśurāma.
And the wheel of his chariot
was stuck in the mud.

85 O Indra-among-men!
As a result of the curse
of that foremost Brahmin,
his chariot started shaking,
and the wheel of his chariot
got stuck in the mud.
Dismay overcame
the son of the charioteer
on the field of battle.

86 Like a full-flowering
sacred *caitya*-tree
with its *vedi*-platform
sinking in the earth –
was his chariot's plight.
The Brahmin's curse
made his chariot sway.
He could not recall
Paraśurāma's missile.

87 His fierce snake-arrows
were disintegrated
by Pārtha-Arjuna.
In his hour of crisis,
unable to endure
his terrible plight,
despairing he raised
both his arms and began
to vilify virtue.

88 "Those who know dharma
have always proclaimed
that dharma protects those
who cherish dharma.
I have always cherished dharma
as best as I could.
It has harmed me.
It forsakes its *bhaktas.*
It protects no one."

89 He kept repeating this.
The arrows of Arjuna
had driven him wild.
His horses and charioteer
were confused and shaking.
His mutilated body
refused to obey him.
He kept mocking dharma
again and again.

90 He shot three fearful arrows
which grazed Krishna's hands,
and seven more which wounded
the son of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

91 Arjuna retaliated with a shower
of seventy arrows as swift
and fierce as Indra's thunderbolt
and Pāvaka-Agni's flames.

92 Those swift and awesome shafts
wounded Karṇa
and slid inside the earth.
Karṇa trembled,
but continued to fight
as best as he could.

93 Getting a grip on himself,
he readied
his Brāhma-missile.
Seeing this,
Arjuna charged his Aindra-
missile with mantras.

94 Charging with mantras his Gāṇḍīva,
bowstring and arrows,
foe-crushing Arjuna
released
a torrent of arrows,
like Purandara-Indra sending rain.

95 They whizzed from the chariot
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
all those mahā-virulent
and swift arrows,
and materialised in a flash
near Karṇa's chariot.

96 The mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa destroyed
every single one of them.
Seeing this,
the valiant Vṛṣṇi hero
Krishna said:

97 "Shoot some other missile,
son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
These are all futile,
against the son of Rādhā."
So Arjuna readied the Brāhma
missile with mantras.

98 The arrows from that missile
obscured Karṇa.
Another volley of arrows!
Then Karṇa,
with stone-sharpened shafts,
cut Arjuna's bowstring.

99 Then, one after another,
as Arjuna kept re-stringing,
he severed
the second, third,
fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh
and eighth bowstring.

100 The ninth, tenth, and eleventh!
It never occurred
to Karṇa, who could shoot
hundreds of arrows,
that Arjuna could re-string
a hundred bowstrings.

101 Re-stringing his bow,
and charging it
with mantras, Pāṇḍava Arjuna
clouded Karṇa
with a stream of flaming
snake-arrows.

102 What happened on the field
was unbelievable –
so swiftly did Arjuna
re-string his bow each time
that Karṇa
never even guessed.

103 Karṇa did succeed, however,
in repulsing the shafts
of ambidexterous Savyasācī-Arjuna,
and prove himself
more valiant
than Pṛthā-Kuntī's son.

104 Seeing Arjuna losing out
against Karṇa,
Krishna advised:
"Shoot continuously.
Choose superior weapons.
Advance, Pārtha-Arjuna!"

105 Selecting gruesome
flaming-like-Agni
and snake-venomous iron shafts
and charging them
with divine mantras,
foe-crushing

106 And diadem-wearing Arjuna
fitted them
to the Raudra-missile.
O king!
In the meantime, the earth swallowed
Rādheya-Karṇa's wheel.

107 Rādhā's son Karṇa
leapt nimbly
from his chariot
and with both hands
struggled to free
the chariot-wheel.

108 Such was the energy
with which Karṇa
heaved the wheel up,
the entire seven-islanded,
hill-forest-and-lake-filled earth
rose four fingers high.

109 Seeing his wheel stuck,
infuriated Karṇa
broke into tears and,
glancing in the direction
of Arjuna,
Rādhā's son said:

110 “Wait, Pārtha-Arjuna!
O mahā-bowman,
give me time,
a little time,
to jerk my wheel
out of the earth.

111 Fate has done this,
Pārtha-Arjuna,
embedded my left wheel.
Do not now do
what only a coward
will do.

112 Son of Kuntī!
Do not take
the coward’s way out.
You are famed
for your prowess
in battle.

113 O Pāṇḍava!
Make that prowess
still more special!
Hair dishevelled, retreating,
a Brahmin, or appealing
with palms folded in *añjali*,

114 Or seeking shelter,
laying down arms,
begging for his life,
or one whose arrows
and armour and weapons
are destroyed – Arjuna,

115 All such unfortunates are spared
by noble-vowed warriors.
O Pāṇḍava!
The whole world
praises your nobility
and heroism.

116 You know *yuddha*-dharma,
the ethics of war.
You have studied Vedānta,
you have performed
sacred rituals,
and purified yourself
with sanctified water.
You are expert in the use
of celestial weapons.
Immeasurable is the power
of your ātman.
You are valiant
like Kārtavīrya-Arjuna!

117 O mahā-muscled one!
You are in your chariot,
I am on the ground.
Let me pull my wheel out.
Till then,
hold back your arrows.

118 Son of Pāṇḍu!
I am not afraid
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
I am not afraid of you.
You are the son
of a Kṣatriya,
you are the glory
of a famous family,
you are the one
adding to its glory.
That is why I speak to you
the way I speak to you.
Forgive me, O Pāṇḍava,
for the way I speak to you."

SECTION NINETY-ONE

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna
(continued Sañjaya)
said to Rādheya-Karṇa:
"How good of you, Rādheya,
to think of dharma now.
In distress the low-minded
invariably blame providence.
It's convenient to overlook
one's own misdeeds.

2 Where was your dharma, Karṇa,
when you and the son
of Subala, Śakuni,
and Suyodhana-Duryodhana
ordered Draupadī,
in her period, draped
in a single dress,
dragged before the sabhā?
Did you think of dharma then?

3 What happened to your dharma
when Śakuni, the dice-expert,
cheated the innocent rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
in the dice-game?

4 What happened to your dharma, Karṇa,
when at the end of their thirteen-year exile,
you refused
to return the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas ?

5 What happened to your dharma
when rājā Duryodhana,
acting on your advice,
fed-poisoned food to Bhīma,
and had him stung
by venomous serpents?

6 Son of Rādhā!
What happened to your dharma
when you plotted
to burn down the Pāṇḍavas
when they were sleeping
in the lacquer-house?

7 And when Duḥśāsana, in the sabhā,
was molesting Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
who was in her period,
and you openly
made fun of her, what happened then
to your dharma, Karṇa?

8 Son of Rādhā!
When the unāryan,
despicable Kauravas insulted
innocent Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
and you watched the spectacle,
where was your dharma then?

9 'The Pāṇḍavas are finished;
they are in hell,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī!
Go get another husband!'
When you said this
to graceful-elephant-gaited Draupadī,

10 Looking straight at her,
where was your dharma then?
And where was your dharma
when you conspired with Śakuni
and, greedy for their kingdom, invited
the Pāṇḍavas to a second dice-game?

11 What happened to your dharma
when you and the host
of other mahā-chariot-heroes
joined forces
and attacked and killed
young helpless Abhimanyu?

12 If it was nowhere then,
why shout your tongue dry
invoking dharma now?
O charioteer's son, shout
all the dharma you like –
you will not escape now.

13 Defeated by Puṣkara at dice,
Nala won back his kingdom
with valour and virtue.
And so will the Pāṇḍavas
with their strength and their friends
regain their kingdom,

14 And helped by the Somakas
wipe out their enemies.
They are lions-among-men,
they are devoted to dharma.
They will utterly destroy
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

15 O Bharata descendant!
(continued Sañjaya)
Karṇa listened to these words
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and lowered his head in shame,
and did not say a word.

16 But with a mahā-burst
of energy and valour,
O descendant of Bharata,
he brandished his bow.
His lips trembled as he prepared
to attack Pārtha-Arjuna.

17 Vāsudeva-Krishna said
to bull-brave Phālguna-Arjuna:
"O mahā-powerful hero!
Your celestial missile –
use it now,
and kill him!"

18 The advice of the deity
inspired Arjuna
into a fierce anger.
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
recalled all the horrible ill-deeds
of Karṇa.

19 Angry flames sparked
from all the pores
of his body.
O rājā!
What a spectacle!
Unbelievable!

20 Karṇa saw this
and released a shower
of celestial arrows
from his Brāhma-missile,
and tried once again
to free his chariot-wheel.

21 Pārtha-Arjuna retaliated
with a counter-volley
from his Brāhma-missile.
That accurately aimed arrow shower
of Pāṇḍava Arjuna
wounded Karṇa.

22 Then Kuntī's son Arjuna
targeted Karṇa
with a weapon
dear to Jātaveda-Agni,
a weapon that blazed
with fierce incandescence.

23 Employing his Varuṇa-weapon,
Karṇa snuffed out
the flaming Pāvaka-weapon.
The horizon darkened,
and pitch-black gloom
overpowered the directions.

24 The valiant son of Pāṇḍu,
Arjuna remained unconfused.
Discharging
his Vāyavya-wind-weapon,
he scattered
the dark clouds.

25 Eager to finish off
the son of Pāṇḍu,
the charioteer's son
swiftly readied
a mahā-horrific,
flaming Pāvaka-arrow.

26 O rājā! No sooner had
he reverently fitted
that arrow to the bow
than the earth trembled,
her mountains and forests
and seas and oceans trembled.

27 O descendant of Bharata!
Fierce winds blew,
dust storms raged,
and the gods in heaven
began shouting,
"Hai! Hai!"

28 O respectworthy monarch!
Seeing the charioteer's son
Karṇa take aim,
the Pāṇḍavas lost heart
and were overcome
by deep depression.

29 Speeding like a thunderbolt
fired from the hands
of Śakra-Indra,
Karṇa's arrow penetrated
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's chest
like a snake an ant-hill.

30 Mahā-ātmaned, dreadful-
deed-doer Bībhatsu-
Arjuna let slip
the Gāṇḍīva, and swayed –
the foe-crusher swayed
like a splendid mountain!

31 Leaping from his vehicle,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Karṇa, with both hands, tried
to free his chariot-wheel
with mahā-powerful strength.
But fate decreed otherwise.

32 In the meantime,
diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna
regained consciousness,
and readied a Yama-rod arrow

33 Called the *añjalika*,
and Vāsudeva-Krsihna
said to mahātmā Arjuna:
"Slice the head of your enemy
Vṛṣa-Karṇa before
he climbs into his chariot."

34 Saying, "So be it,"
to the words of Lord Krishna,
Arjuna fitted an arrow
blazing like fire
and shot it at Karṇa's
wheel-stuck mahā-chariot
whose flag was fluttering
like a dazzling sun.

35 Elephant-symbolled, the flag
was a gold-crafted marvel
of professional artisans –
a thing of pure beauty,
glittering with gold,
pearls, gems, and diamonds.

36 That praiseworthy flag
enthused your soldiers
and terrified your enemies.
A world-renowned flag,
lustrous like the sun,
like fire, like the moon.

37 But diadem-decked Arjuna,
with a razor-sharp arrow,
a gold-feathered shaft
that shone like the flame
of the sacred fire, shredded
Karṇa's resplendent flag.

38 And suddenly everywhere
rose cries of "Hai! Hai!"
in the ranks of the Kauravas.
With the fall of the flag
fell the pride of the Kauravas,
their fame, their fond hopes.

39 O descendant of Bharata!
Seeing the flag shredded
by Arjuna, the swift-shooting
hero of the Kauravas,
your soldiers lost hope
of a victory for Karṇa.

40 With the aim of quickly
killing Karṇa, Arjuna
removed from his quiver
an *añjalika* that dazzled like
Indra's thunderbolt, Agni's rod,
and the thousand-rayed sun.

41 Flesh-ripper, blood-ripper,
blazing like the sun
and the Vaiśvānara-fire,
mahā-precious, swift-speeding,
six-feathered, longer than
three fist-closed arm's-lengths,

42 Fierce like the thunderbolt
of thousand-eyed Indra,
like the doomsday fire
of Kāla, like Śiva's trident,
like Nārāyaṇa's *cakra*,
fearful life-annihilator . . .

43 Offering pūjā-respect
to the weapon whom the gods
could not repulse,
nor the hosts of anti-gods,
mahātmā Pārtha-Arjuna
cheerfully took aim.

44 Seeing the weapon readied
for release in battle,
all the world's moving
and unmoving creatures trembled,
and the ṛṣis exclaimed,
"*Svasti*! May all go well!"

45 The wielder of the Gāṇḍīva
aimed the peerless arrow.
Locking it tight
to another mahā-weapon,
he pulled the Gāṇḍīva taut,
and declared:

46 "This mahā-weaponed mahā-arrow
will shred the flesh and heart
of my foes. If ever
I have pleased my gurus
and elders, if ever
listened to my well-wishers –

47 May the power of that truth,
may that tapasyā destroy
my powerful foe Karṇa."
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
intoned this, and released
the arrow to kill Karṇa.

48 Charged with infallible
Atharvāṅgiras energy
was that incandescent
death-dealing arrow shot
by victory-seeking diadem-
decked Arjuna, who said:

49 "O sun-and-moon-radiant arrow!
Bring me victory!
Despatch Karṇa to Yama!"
Diadem-and-garland-decorated
Kirīṭamāli-Arjuna,
joyously expecting victory,

50 Fired that sun-and-moon-
bright victory-granting arrow.
Like the sun, it lit up
the sky and the directions.
Like Indra's thunder slicing Vṛtra,
it sliced the head of his foe.

51 O rājā! With that mantra-
charged incomparable
añjalika mahā-arrow,
Mahendra-Indra's son
severed the head
of Vaikartana-Karṇa.

52 Sliced by the *añjalika*,
it fell on the ground.
Like the radiant sun rising,
like the afternoon sun
high in the sky
in the autumn season,

53 Like the crimson-maṇḍala
evening sun setting
in the Asta hills,
it fell on the battlefield,
reluctantly forsaking Karṇa's
handsome, noble body,

54 Very reluctantly,
like a rich man his mansion,
like the mind-lord the senses.
Grievously wounded,
life-bereft, Karṇa's
radiant body toppled,

55 Besmeared with blood,
like a red-chaḷk-streaming
thunder-riven mountain peak.
A radiance from his body
sped through the sky
and entered the sun.

56 And all the brave soldiers
beheld this great wonder
on the field – and marvelled.
And the Pāṇḍavas witnessed
Karṇa killed by Phālguna-Arjuna
and sounded their conches.

57 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna, Krishna,
and the twins, overjoyed,
sounded their conches.
And the Somakas saw
Karṇa lying dead,
and roared like lions.

58 Jubilant, they waved
their hands and their drums,
and beat their durms
O Indra-among-rājās!
The Pāṇḍava soldiers
congratulated Pārtha-Arjuna.

59 And other brave warriors
saw the lifeless, savaged
body of Karṇa
asprawl on the battlefield,
and embraced each other,
and danced and screamed.

60 The body-less head of Karṇa
blazed on the battlefield
like a mountain peak
downed by a storm,
like a yajña-flame extinguished,
like the sun-orb setting
in the Asta hills.

61 The corpse of Karṇa,
riddled with blood-drenched arrows,
blazed like the sun
with its dazzling rays.

62 The arrow-rayed Karṇa-sun,
after scorching its enemies,
was forced to set
by valiant Arjuna-Kāla.

63 Like the setting sun
pulling in its glorious rays,
Karṇa's body pulled in Arjuna's arrow,
and passed away.

64 O respectworthy monarch!
The añjalika sliced the head of Karṇa
who never put off till tomorrow
what needed to be gifted today.

65 In front of all the soldiers,
speeding over their heads,
the arrow of Arjuna carried Karṇa's head
across the battlefield.

66 Seeing the arrow-riddled,
blood-drenched body of Karṇa
asprawl on the battlefield,
the rājā of Madra
fled the battleground,
in his flag-shredded chariot.

67 And the grievously wounded
Kaurava warriors, seeing
Arjunas mahā-war-flag
again and again
resplendent on the field,
scattered in fear.

68 The thousand-petalled-lotus-
lovely head of Karṇa,
the hero whose feats
equalled thousand-eyed Indra's
dropped like the thousand-rayed sun
suddenly seeting.

69 Broad-chested, lotus-eyed,
incandescently famous Karṇa –
that hero was slain
by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrow –

70 His corpse lay on the dusty field.
Glancing again and again
at the body of his dead son,
Savitā the sun god
slowly, slowly swerved his rays
to his abode in the west.

SECTION NINETY-TWO

1 Seeing the army decimated
by arrows in the clash
between Karṇa and Arjuna,
and Karṇa killed on foot,
Śalya, deprived of his weapons,
fled in his chariot.

2 Seeing his army's chariots,
horses and elephants destroyed,
Sūtaputra-Karṇa killed,
the eyes of Duryodhana
filled with tears,
he sighed in pain.

3 Arrow-riddled, blood-drenched,
the corpse of brave Karṇa
lay asprawl on the field,
like a fallen sun.
And the warriors came
and stood around it.

4 Your warriors (said Sañjaya)
and theirs – they all came,
some exulting, some afraid,
some grieving, some awe-struck,
some stiff as if dead –
each according to his nature.

5 Hearing of mahā-energetic
Karṇa's death at the hands
of Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
his armour and weapons smashed,
many fled, like cows scattering
after a leader-bull's death.

6 Instilling horrendous fear
in the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
horrific Bhīma roared
and danced on the field,
bounding like a lion
and slapping his arm-pits.

7 O rājā! The Somakas
and Sṛñjayas embraced,
and sounded their conches.
And the Kṣatriya ranks
of the Pāṇḍavas rejoiced
at the slaughter of Karṇa.

8 Like a lion an elephant,
mahā-masculine Arjuna
exterminated Karṇa.
This was how bull-brave
Pārtha-Arjuna
wreaked his vengeance.

9 O rājā! Driving his flag-
shredded chariot sadly
towards Duryodhana,
the Madra-rājā Śalya
with tears in his eyes
said plaintively:

10 "Your elephants and horses
and chariots and leaders
have journeyed to the kingdom
of Yama. Hill-huge elephants,
horses and foot-soldiers
have clashed and expired.

11 O Bharata descendant!
Never was a battle
like the one fought today
in which Karṇa came near
to killing Krishna and Arjuna
and your other enemies.

12 It must be that fate
favours Kuntī's sons,
protecting the Pāṇḍavas
and destroying us.
Else why should your heroes
get slaughtered by your enemies?

13 Were not all your heroes
multi-guṇa-accomplished?
Were they not powerful,
brave, radiant like Kubera,
like Vaivasvata-Yama,
like Vāsava-Indra?

14 Your invincible well-wishers –
all killed by the Pāṇḍavas!
But do not grieve,
O descendant of Bharata!
Such is fate. Take heart.
No one wins all the time."

15 Listening to these words
of the king of Madra,
and recalling his own misdeeds,
disconsolate Duryodhana,
as if semi-conscious,
heaved deep sighs.

SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked:
"Sañjaya!
Describe to me
the condition of the arrow-
consumed fleeing Kauravas
and the Sṛñjaya forces
on the day of the gruesome clash
between Karṇa and Arjuna."

2 O rājā! Listen to me
(replied Sañjaya)
Listen to me carefully
while I describe
the mahā-horrific slaughter
of men, horses and elephants.

3 O rājā! After killing Karṇa,
Pārtha-Arjuna
roared like a lion.
And your sons,
when they heard him,
were mahā-afraid.

4 With the death of Karṇa,
none in your army
could summon up courage;
none desired
to regroup
and counter-attack.

5 When Karṇa the island
was submerged
by diadem-decorated Arjuna,
your soldiers
were like merchants
aboard a storm-shattered ship.

6 With the death of Karṇa,
your unprotected
arrow-wounded soldiers,
stricken with fear,
were like a flock of deer
mauled by a lion.

7 Devastated by ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna,
they fled the battlefield
that evening
like horn-shattered bulls
and fang-crushed snakes.

8 With the death of Karṇa,
O rājā,
with the deaths of all
your army's leaders,
harassed by arrows,
your sons fled in fear.

9 Frightened, staring blankly
at each other,
deprived of armour
and weapons, dazed,
they did not even know
which way to escape.

10 Terrified, the Kaurava soldiers
fell atop each other in their haste.
"Dreadful deed-doer
Bibhatsu-Arjuna,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
are after me!"

11 So they screamed. And others
fled on horses
and elephants, the mahā-chariot-
heroes in chariots,
leaving the foot-soldiers
far behind.

12 Mahā-chariot-heroes
were crushed by elephants;
massive chariots ran over
and mangled horses;
and horse-riders trampled
and killed foot-soldiers.

13 With the death of Karṇa,
O rājā,
your soldiers were like
a band of travellers
in a forest, savaged
by snakes and bandits.

14 They ran wild
like rider-less elephants;
they went derserk
like arm-less humans.
Terror-stricken, they saw Pārtha-Arjunas
everywhere.

15 Seeing his warriors scattering
in fear of Bhīma,
troubled Duryodhana exclaimed,
"Hai! Hai!"
and turning to his charioteer
he said:

16 "Drive me carefully
behind the army ranks.
I'll take my stand there,
bow in hand.
I dare Pārtha-Arjuna
to break my stand.

17 Even the mahā-ocean
cannot go beyond its shores.
If Kaunteya-Arjuna
defies me,
I promise this:
I will kill him today.

18 The debt I owe Karṇa,
I will repay today.
I will kill Arjuna
and Govinda-Krishna
and that arrogant
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma."

19 Hearing these brave,
aryan-honourable words
of the Kaurava rājā Duryodhana,
the charioteer
slowly manoeuvred
the gold-caparison-horse chariot.

20 O honour-deserving monarch!
Without chariots,
without horses and elephants,
an army of only
twentyfive thousand foot-soldiers
was re-grouped.

21 Blazing with anger, Bhīma
and Pṛṣata's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
with the might
of their four-fold army,
encircled and attacked Duryodhana
with arrow-showers.

22 But your warriors
challenged the might
of Bhīma and Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
even calling out
their names and daring them
to open combat.

23 The anger of Bhīma
knew no bounds.
Brandishing his mace,
he leapt from his chariot
into the ranks
of the foot-soldiers.

24 Trusting the strength
of his bare arms,
Kuntī's son, dharma-abiding
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
left his chariot
to fight fairly on foot.

25 Wielding his massive
gold-filigreed mace,
he slaughtered the foot-soldiers
like rod-carrying
Daṇḍapāṇī Antaka-Yama,
the god of death.

26 But the foot-soldiers too,
abandoning all love
of life, stood their ground,
and rushed at Bhīma
like swarms of insects
into a blazing fire.

27 Like creatures surrendering their life-breath
to Antaka-yama,
the god of death,
those fanatic soldiers
clashed against Bhīma –
and perished.

28 Mahā-powerful Bhīma,
whirling his mace,
swept through the ranks
of twentyfive thousand foot-soldiers
like a hawk,
and slaughtered them all.

29 The truly incomparably
valiant mahā-powerful Bhīma,
after slaughtering
twentyfive thousand soldiers,
stood there,
alongside Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

30 Heroic Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
attacked the remaining chariot-warriors.
Mādrī's twin sons,
the mahā-chariot-hero
Śatyaki
attacked Śakuni

31 Joyfully and powerfully,
after decimating
the army of Duryodhana.
With sharp arrows
they killed the horse-riders
of Śakuni's army,

32 After which they targeted
Śakuni himself.
A mahā-fierce clash ensued.
Lord! *Prabhu*!
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna drove
towards your chariot-warriors,

33 And twanged his three-worlds-
renowned Gāṇḍīva bow.
Seeing the hero whose charioteer
is Krishna,
and whose chariot is pulled
by pure-white horses –

34 Seeing Arjuna charging
at them,
your soldiers scattered in fear.
Twentyfive thousand foot-soldiers,
earlier,
had become victims of Kāla,

35 Deprived of their chariots
and mutilated by arrows.
After slaughtering them,
the mahā-chariot-hero,
the tiger-among-men,
the finest of the Pāñcālas,

36 The mahā-minded Pāñcāla prince
Dhṛṣṭadyumna
appeared once again
in person,
with Bhīma standing
alongside him.

37 How splendid he looked –
that mahā-bow-expert,
that scorcher of foes –
Śrīmān Dhṛṣṭadyumna!
White pigeon-complexioned horses,
flagstaff of *kovidāra*-wood –

38 Seeing him, your soldiers
fled in terror.
The rājā of Gāndhāra
was shooting arrows
with expert dexterity
when illustrious

39 Nakula and Sahadeva,
Mādrī's twin sons,
and Sātyaki chased him.
O respectworthy monarch!
Cekitāna, Śikhaṇḍin
and Draupadī's five sons

40 Sounded their war conches
after devastating
your mahā-army.
Seeing your soldiers
turn their backs
and flee in panic,

41 They butchered them
like a victorious bull
goring a defeated rival.
Seeing a section
of your army
still surviving, Pāṇḍava

42 Arjuna, the ambidexterous
Savyasācī warrior,
was overcome by anger.
Intrepid Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
launched an attack, O rājā,
on your chariot-heroes,

43 Pulling fully taut
his three-worlds-celebrated
Gāṇḍīva-bow,
and harassing them
with a sudden tremendous
shower of arrows.

44 And a thick darkness
descended on the field,
obscuring everything.
Not only pitch darkness,
but swirling dust
covered the earth –

45 Which so traumatised
your dismayed warriors
that they fled in panic.
O lord of the earth!
Though his army was in disarray,
the Kaurava rājā,

46 Your son Duryodhana
stood his ground
and counter-attacked.
He had decided
to face the Pāṇḍavas
on the battlefield,

47 Like the anti-god Bali
challenging the gods
in the distant past.
O finest of the Bharatas!
The Pāṇḍavas did not waver,
and, shouting war-cries,

48 They angrily retaliated,
showering war-weapons
repeatedly on Duryodhana.
Duryodhana remained unfazed
on the battlefield.
With very sharp arrows –

49 Hundreds and thousands
of them – he killed
his hosts of enemies.
Anticipating every move
of the Pāṇḍavas,
he baffled their strategy.

50 It was astonishing!
We saw it all –
the valour of your son,
single, all by himself,
on the battlefield,
battling the Pāṇḍavas!

51 O Indra-among-rājās!
Seeing his army
in such deep distress,
your percipient son,
mahātmā Duryodhana,
with the aim

52 Of reviving their morale,
gave this advice
to his soldiers:
"I can see how fear
has gripped you.
There is no place on earth,

53 No place where you can hide
from the Pāṇḍavas.
Where will you escape?
They are not all that many,
the Pāṇḍavas. Krishna and Arjuna
are badly wounded.

54 I will kill them all today.
Victory will be ours!
If we split up,
the Pāṇḍavas today
will finish us off
one by one.

55 Is it not nobler
to stay united
and die fighting?
Kṣatriya dharma says:
Happiness
is to die fighting.

56 The dead feel no pain here.
They enjoy eternal bliss
hereafter.
Listen to me –
all you Kṣatriyas
who have gathered here.

57 The god of death Yama
spares neither hero nor coward.
We have sworn
the Kṣatriya-vow.
Are we fools
that we will not fight?

58 Will your run away
and be butchered
by barbarous Bhīma?
Have you forgotten the dharma
of your fathers
and grandfathers?

59 O Kṣatriyas!
O Kauravas!
What greater crime is there,
What worse adharma
For a Kṣatriya
Than to turn tail
And flee from battle?
What better road
Is there to heaven
Then *yuddha*-dharma,
A soldier's dharma?
Die in battle,
My warriors, and enjoy heaven!"

60 But they did not listen
to the words of your son
(said Sañjaya).
Grievously wounded,
the Kaurava warriors
scattered in all directions.

SECTION NINETY-FOUR

1 Sañjaya said:
Seeing your son trying
to enthuse your army,
frightened and bewildered
Madra-rājā Śalya
said to Duryodhana:

2 "O hero!
Look at this awesome spectacle!
Corpses of men, horses, elephants!
Hill-huge rutling elephants
With arrow-mangled bodies!

3 Some writhing in agony, some dead.
Shattered armours, weapons, shields
And swords of their lifeless riders!
Like tree-and-vegetation-rich hills
Toppled by thunder-and-lightning!

4 Smashed and ripped by arrows,
Their bells and goads
And *tomara*-lances and war-flags!
Their gold-caparisoned bodies
Crimson with blood. Arrow-riddled
Horses writhing, vomiting blood.

5 Neighing piteously, eyes rolling,
Terror-stricken, biting the earth.
Corpses of arrow-mangled horses,
Elephants, foot-soldiers
Litter the battlefield,
A storehouse of dead heroes!

6 Most lifeless, some barely alive.
Loaded with the crushed remains
Of men, horses, elephants, chariots,
All bereft of their splendour
In the mahā-carnage, the earth
Is like the river of hell, Vaitaraṇī.

7 Elephants with shattered tusks
And battered bodies heaving
Agonisingly on the ground.
They lie there, vomiting blood,
And twist in pain
And trumpet their pitiful, soft cries.

8 Whole congregations of huge chariots
Shroud the field like dark clouds,
Their wheels, arrows, axles and joints
Smashed; quivers and flags
Shredded; gold-filigree decorations
Reduced to rubbish.

9 Illustrious riders of elephants,
Chariots and horses; foot-soldiers
Grappling with foes – all dead.
Armours, decorations, uniforms,
Weapons destroyed; the earth at peace
With a load of corpses.

10 Thousands of arrow-riddled
Mahā-powerful warriors
Lie asprawl under the sky
Like radiant planets fallen from high,
And the battlefield at night
Looks like the star-sprinkled sky.

11 Dotted with the corpses
Of Kaurava and Sṛñjaya warriors
Slain by Arjuna and Karṇa's arrows,
And of others wounded and dying,
The battlefield seems to glow vividly
With countless sacrificial fires.

12 Slicing through the bodies
Of elephants, horses and men,
The arrows of Karṇa and Arjuna
Snuff out their life-breaths
And plunge inside the earth
Like red snakes slithering into holes.

13 O Indra-among-men!
The colossal wreckage
Of elephants, horses and men
Slain by Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
And Karṇa's arrows, and the smashed
Chariots make the field impassable.

14 Glittering chariots pulverised.
Pulverised their warriors,
Magnificent weapons and war-flags.
Pulverised their wheels, axles,
Yokes of *triveṇu*-wood,
Their ropes and all else.

15 Hurled far away, their weapons.
All equipment reduced to nothing:
Vyupaskaras, anukarṣas; fastenings,
Chariot-seats. Gold-and-gemed
Chariots like so many autumn-clouds.

16 Chariots of rājās, now rider-less,
Pulled by swift horses, flanked
By soldiers, elephant-formations,
Cavalry and ordinary chariots,
Ran over hosts of fleeing soldiers,
Crushing them to pulp.

17 Scattered all over the battlefield:
Parigha iron clubs, *paraśu*-axes,
Śūla-spears, *mudgara*-mallets,
Brilliantly flashing swords,
And maces – all them crafted
With fine gold-filigree.

18 Gold-ornamented bows,
Gold-feathered arrows, ṛṣṭi-swords,
Sharp unsheathed rapiers
Dazzling with a delicate sheen,
Prāsa barbed darts
With exquisite gold-inlaid handles,

19 Umbrellas, fans, conches,
And a vivid variety of garlands
Lay strewn on the battlefield.
Cloth-spreads on elephant-backs,
Flags, uniforms, trappings,
Glittering diadems, necklaces, crowns,

20 White yak-tail fans, O rājā,
And coral and pearl neck-wear–
All lay strewn on the field.
Head gear, wrist-ornaments,
Aṅgada bracelets, beautiful
Gold-threaded necklaces,

21 Precious gems and diamonds,
Auspicious small and large
Gold-and-pearl-inlaid jewellery,
Bodies used to lavish luxury,
Faces surpassing the moon
In loveliness,

22 Bodies, sensual pleasure-providers,
Dresses to satisfy every desire,
Sensuous delights of the mind –
Renouncing all these
And following sva-dharma, gloriously
They attained heavenly felicity.

23 O rājā Duryodhana!
Bestower of honour on others!
Let us return to our camp.
Let the soldiers be! Lord! *Prabhu*!
The sun is setting. O Indra-of-men!
You are the cause of this carnage."

24 Having said this to Duryodhana,
Grief-wracked Śalya kept silent.
Muttering "Hai Karṇa! Hai Karṇa!"
Duryodhana bared his agony.
He was not in control of himself.
Tears streamed down his face.

25 Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman
And other Indras-among-men
Did their best to console him,
But returned to their camps
When they saw Arjuna's war-flag
Fluttering in resplendent glory.

26 So drenched was the earth
With the blood of men and horses
And elephants that she looked
Like an everywhere-roaming courtesan
Flaunting a crimson dress,
Crimson garland, and gold ornaments.

27 O rājā! On that awesome
Blood-dripping Rudra-muhūrta evening,
The Kauravas lacked courage
Even to look at the earth;
They prepared themselves to journey
To the realm of the gods.

28 O rājā! The grieving Kauravas,
Exclaiming "Hai Karṇa! Hai Karṇa!"
In piteous monotone,
And staring at the setting sun,
Returned speedily
To their army camps.

29 Pierced through and through
By gold-feathered, stone-sharpened
Arrows shot from the Gāṇḍīva –
Their plumes crimsoned with blood –
Karṇa lay inert on the field
Like the bright-rayed sun.

30 The sun god, Bhagavān Vivasvat,
Always gracious to his *bhaktas*,
Having touched with his rays
The bloodied body of Karna,
Proceeded to the western ocean
To wash his crimsoned hands.

31 Then, marvelling, they all left,
The gods and the ṛṣis
Went to their different abodes.
In a state of happy wonderment,
Others left also, some to the sky,
And some to the underworld.

32 They all left, awe-struck
By this incredible spectacular
Clash between Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
And Adhiratha's son Karṇa.
The Kaurava and Pāṇḍava warriors
Left, extolling both the heroes.

33 His flesh-armour shredded,
his uniform drenched
with streaming blood,
his life-breath exhausted,
yet Rādhā's son Karṇa
blazed with glory.

34 He was all adazzle,
like molten gold,
like fire, like the sun.
They looked at him,
and they wondered:
But he is alive!

35 Mahārāja! Like the lion
instilling fear
in beasts of the forest,
the charioteer's son,
though dead, stirred fear
in the warriors.

36 O tiger-among-men!
Not a trace of change
in him – he looked
so alive!
Mahā-ātmaned Karṇa
was dead but alive!

37 Like the full moon
was the face
of the charioteer's son
Sūtaputra Karṇa:
handsome head, handsome neck,
dazzling dress.

38 O rājā! With ornaments
that glittered,
with Jambu-gold *aṅgada*-arm-bands,
Vaikartana-Karṇa
looked like a giant
leaf-sprouting tree.

39 O tiger-among-men!
Though he glowed
like excellent gold,
like a radiant flame,
he was extinguished
by Arjuna's arrow-showers.

40 Like a blazing fire
extinguished by water,
the Karṇa-conflagration
on the battlefield
was quenched by the cloud
of Pārtha-Arjuna.

41 In that brilliant battle
he gained brilliant fame;
shooting swarm upon swarm
of arrows,
he terrified the ten points
of the directions;

42 After which, Karṇa and his sons
became victims
of Pārtha-Arjuna's prowess.
Battering with his weapons
all the Pāṇḍavas
and the Pāñcālas,

43 Harassing his enemies
with torrential arrows,
revealing to the world
his versatile valour
that equalled the energy
of the thousand-rayed sun,

44 Vaikartana-Karṇa,
the charioteer's son Karṇa
died, along with his sons –
gift-giving Karṇa,
the wish-fulfilling tree
of so many birds.

45 To whoever asked,
he gave;
he never said no;
he was always called good
by the good. That Vṛsa-Karṇa
has died in a chariot-duel.

46 Who gifted his wealth readily
to Brahmins,
that mahā-ātmaned one
who would give anything,
he who would freely part
with even his own life,

47 The darling of the ladies,
always the giver,
that mahā-chariot-hero,
fatally scorched
by Pārtha-Arjuna's arrows,
has found the final goal.

48 O rājā! On whom your sons
depended so much –
he has gone to heaven,
taking with him
their hopes of victory,
their armour of trust.

49 When Karṇa died, rivers reversed;
The day-maker sun Divākara
Disappeared in the West;
The fire-and-sun-radiant
Auspicious son of Soma the moon,
Budha, veered off-course.

50 The sky seemed to sunder.
The earth screamed.
Dry, fierce winds blew.
The directions burst into flame.
The oceans surged and roared
With torrid turbulence.

51 Forest-filled mountains shook.
The world's creatures panicked.
O lord of the earth!
The planet Bṛhaspati ringed
The Rohiṇī constellation, and shone
Like the sun and the moon.

52 When Karṇa died, the directions
Blazed. The sky darkened.
The earth wobbled.
Fiercely blazing meteors
Plummeted. Creatures
That prowl in the night exulted.

53 When Arjuna with his razor.
Arrows sliced the moon-
Lovely head of Karṇa,
The gods in the sky
Burst into wails
Of "Hai! Hai!"

54 O rājā! When Arjuna killed
His enemy Karṇa, whom the gods,
Gandharvas and humans offered
Pūjā-respect, it was like
Śatakratu-Indra killing Vṛtra
In the distant past.

55 Seated in a cloud-rumbling chariot
That dazzled like the autumnal sun
At high noon, whose war-flag
And pennants fluttered noisily,
Which shimmered like snow,
Like moonlight, conch, and crystal;

56 Whose horses were like the horses
Of Mahendra-Indra, the two heroes,
Both valiant like Mahendra-Indra,
Both adorned with gold ornaments
And gems and pearls
And diamonds and corals,

57 Both refulgent like fire
And the day-making sun Divākara,
Sped across the battlefield
Fearlessly, like Viṣṇu and Vāsava-Indra
Riding the same chariot.

58 Spreading terror in the ranks
Of their enemies, the Kauravas,
By twanging the bowstring
And slapping arm-pits, ape-flagged Arjuna
And finest-of-birds-Garuḍa-flagged
Krishna –

59 Both of immeasurable prowess –
Joyfully placed two excellent
Conches to their mouths and blew
Loudly, terrifying their enemies.
Two finest of men, and two
Snow-white, gold-inlaid conches,

60 The Pāñcajanya
and the Devadatta,
both of profound sound
that reverberated
in the earth, the sky,
and the ten directions.

61 O excellent rājā!
The blare of the conches
of Arjuna
and Mādhava-Krishna
instilled terror
in the Kaurava ranks.

62 Those two finest-of-men delighted
Yudhisthira, because the noise
Of their conches echoed across
Rivers, mountains, forests, caves,
Directions, and struck fear
In the ranks of your son's army.

63 O descendant of Bharata!
As soon as they heard the noise,
The Kaurava warriors fled,
Leaving the field of battle,
Deserting the Madra-ruler Śalya
And the Bharata lord Duryodhana.

64 On that mahā-battlefield
Everyone assembled to honour
Janārdana-Krishna
And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Who blazed with the brilliance
Of two newly risen suns.

65 Pierced with Karṇa's arrows,
Those two foe-destroying heroes,
Acyuta-Krishna and Arjuna,
Appeared on the battlefield
Like the darkness-dispelling sun
And the lambent gleaming moon.

66 Removing the arrows, the two
Incomparable heroes, accompanied
By friends and well-wishers,
Returned to the camp,
Like Viṣṇu and Vāsava-Indra
Gracing a yajña-enclosure.

67 After the death of Karṇa
In that unparalleled battle,
Gods, gandharvas, men Cāraṇas,
Mahā-ṛṣis, yakṣas, mahā-snakes
Offered pūjā-respect to Krishna
And Arjuna : "May victory be yours!"

68 Like the lord of gods Indra
And Keśava-Viṣṇu honoured
By well-wishers after the killing
Of the anti-god Bala,
Krishna and Arjuna received
Fulsome praise from their followers.

SECTION NINETY-FIVE

1 O (continued Sañjaya),
after Vaikartana-Karṇa's death,
thousands of fear-stricken Kauravas
fled in all directions.

2 Hearing that Karṇa had been killed
in the mahā-clash,
the severely wounded warriors
fled in all directions.

3 Slowly, however, all your wounded
and terrified warriors
returned in groups
and reassembled,
after sustained persuasion
by their leaders.

4 O king! On the advice
of Śalya,
your son Duryodhana
passed orders
for an immediate retreat
of the assembled forces.

5 O descendant of Bharata!
Surrounded by survivors
of the Nārāyaṇa army
and other chariot-heroes,
Kṛtavarman speedily withdrew
to his camp.

6 Seeing Adhiratha's son Karṇa
killed in battle,
Sakuni, surrounded
by thousands
of Gāndhāra warriors,
withdrew to his camp.

7 O Bharata rājā!
Śaradvat's son Kṛpa
retreated to his camp
with his contingent of elephants
resembling
huge rain-clouds.

8 Sighing heavy sighs
over and over again
at the victory
of the Pāṇḍavas,
valiant Aśvatthāman
withdrew to his camp.

9 O rājā! The survivors
of the huge Saṁśaptakas force
surrounded fear-stricken Suśarma
who, glancing uneasily
right and left,
hurried back to his camp.

10 As for Duryodhana, the king
with so many relatives killed,
so much laid waste,
anguished and sorrowing
he also, in a daze,
returned to his camp.

11 Finest of chariot-heroes Śalya,
whose war-flag
was in tatters,
glancing uneasily in all directions,
in the same chariot
returned to his camp.

12 All the other
mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Bharatas,
ashamed and confused,
hurried to the safety
of their camps.

13 Seeing Karṇa fall
on the field of battle,
all the Kaurava warriors,
drenched in blood
and shivering with fear,
retreated to their camps.

14 O incomparable Kaurava!
Some mahā-chariot-heroes,
even when fleeing
in all directions,
praised Arjuna,
and some praised Karṇa.

15 Of the thousands of warriors
in your army,
there was not even one
with any passion left
to fight again
in any such mahā-battle.

16 O mahārāja!
When Karṇa perished,
their desire for kingdom perished,
for wives,
their desire for wealth perished,
for life itself.

17 Anguish-and-grief-stricken,
your son Duryodhana
used all his powers
of persuasion
to convince them
to rest easy that night.

18 But they did listen, O rājā,
O lord of the earth;
and the mahā-chariot-heroes
retired to their camps,
but they were deeply depressed,
and their faces were pale.

SECTION NINETY-SIX

1 With Karṇa dead (continued Sañjaya)
and the Kauravas routed,
Dāśārha-Krishna embraced Pārtha-Arjuna,
and said joyfully:

2 "In the past, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
thunder-wielding Indra
killed Vṛtra, and you
today have killed Karṇa.
Forever will mankind extol
these awesome feats.

3 Vṛtra was destroyed
by a mahā-radiant
thunderbolt of Indra,
and you have killed Karṇa
with your bow
and sharp arrows.

4 O Kaunteya-Arjuna!
Come, let us go
to the percipient Kaurava
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and tell him
about your world-shaking feat.

5 How long has he desired
the death of Karṇa!
When you give Dharmarāja
Yudhiṣṭhira the news,
you will be freed
of your debt to him.

6 When you and Karṇa
were locked in that mahā-battle,
Dharma's son,
Dharma-nandana Yudhiṣṭhira
came to the field
to witness it.

7 But he was badly wounded,
and he had to leave.
Bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira
went back
to his tent
to recover."

8 Pārtha-Arjuna said to Keśava-Krishna,
"Let us do so."
Bull-brave Yādava Krishna
drove the chariot-hero Arjuna
to the camp
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

9 Having advised Arjuna,
Krishna said to the soldiers:
"*Bhadram-astu*!
May you fare well!
Stay alert!
Beware of the enemy."

10 Then Govinda-Krishna
addressed Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
Mādrī's twin sons
Nakula and Sahadeva,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
and Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki:

11 "O lords of men!
Stay here and remain alert
until we return
after informing rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
that Karṇa
has been killed by Arjuna."

12 Then, with the permission
of those brave heroes,
Govinda-Krishna
drove Pārtha-Arjuna
to the military camp
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 That tiger-among-rājās
was relaxing
on a golden bed.
Both heroes
happily and respectfully
touched his feet.

14 Seeing them so cheerful,
Yudhiṣṭhira surmised
Rādheya-Karṇa was dead.
He rose from the bed.
Tears of joy
brimmed in his eyes.

15 Foe-crushing, mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira
repeatedly
embraced Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Arjuna,
and spoke to them
sweetly and lovingly.

16 And the bull-brave Yādava,
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and Arjuna gave Yudhiṣṭhira
all the details
of the manner
of Karṇa's death.

17 Folding his palms in respectful *añjali*,
Acyuta-Krishna
smiled and said
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
whose enemy
had been removed:

18 "O rājā! How good it is
that Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
you,
and Mādri's twin sons
are all well.

19 You have escaped
the hair-raising carnage
of battle. Son of Pāṇḍu!
You must now do
what must be done –
and do it quickly.

20 O rājā! The mahā-chariot-hero,
the charioteer's son
Vaikartana-Karṇa is dead.
O descendant of Bharata!
O Indra-among-rājās!
Fate has favoured you with victory.

21 The earth today is drinking
the blood
of the scoundrel Karṇa,
the charioteer's son
who insulted Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
in the gambling hall.

22 O bull-brave Kaurava!
On the field lies
your enemy's arrow-riddled body.
O tiger-among-men!
Look at the mangled corpse
of Karṇa!

23 O mahā-long-and-strong-armed one!
You must now
be very vigilant
when you rule this earth
and enjoy
her bounty."

24 These words of mahātmā
Keśava-Krishna
delighted Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
(continued Sanjaya)
and he replied
to the Dāśārha chief.

25 O Indra-among-rājās Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
"Fortunate indeed!
Fortunate indeed!"
Saying this, Yudhiṣṭhira added:
"Son of Devakī! O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Not surprising

26 At all that,
helped by a charioteer like you,
Pārtha-Arjuna killed Karṇa.
O mahā-muscled one!
It's the grace of your wisdom.
Not surprising at all!"

27 O incomparable Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
Learned-in-dharma
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
pressed Krishna's *aṅgada*-decorated right arm,
and said
to Keśava-Krishna and Arjuna:

28 “Nārada said to me
you are Nara-Nārāyaṇa,
you are dharmātmās,
you are mahātmās,
the most ancient
and the finest of ṛṣis.

29 O mahā-fortune-favoured ones!
Truth-inseeing,
wisdom-illuminated
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
has said the same to me
again and again.

30 O Krishna! It is your grace,
your grace alone,
that makes Pāṇḍu’s son
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
defeat his enemies
without ever retreating in battle.

31 How can we ever lose,
how can anyone defeat us?
Have you not agreed
to be the charioteer
of Pārtha-Arjuna?
Victory will always be ours.

32 Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa,
mahātmā Gautama-Kṛpa,
and so many others
as brave as them,
and so many others
who follow them –

33 With the death of Karṇa,
O Govinda-Krishna,
they are all dead too –
because you wisely advise us.”
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira climbed
into his gold-ornamented chariot.

34 Lion-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira,
in a chariot pulled
by white horses with black tails,
swift as the wind,
drove to the battlefield
to witness the battle.

35 Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira
drove to the field
conversing pleasantly
with the two heroes
accompanying him –
Krishna and Arjuna.

36 And even as he conversed
on agreeable topics
with heroic Mādhava-Krishna
and Phālguna-Arjuna,
he saw bull-brave Karṇa's body
on the field of battle.

37 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
saw the corpse of Karṇa
with arrows sticking out,
hundreds of them,
like the filaments
of a *kadamba*-blossom.

38 He saw the body of Karṇa
illuminated
by the soft light
of a thousand golden lamps
burning
with scented oil,

39 Flesh-armour deprived,
body riddled with arrows.
Seeing Karṇa like this,
dead,
along with his sons,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira

40 Kept staring
again and again
with disbelieving eyes.
Then he began praising
tiger-among-men Mādhava-Krishna
and Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

41 "O Govinda-Krishna!" he said.
"I am the world's rājā today,
with my brothers,
thanks to your wisdom,
thanks to your being
our lord and our protector.

42 When the wicked-atmaned son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Duryodhana hears of the death
of the tiger-among-men
son of Rādhā, Karṇa,
he will lose every hope.

43 O bull-brave Krishna!
We are grateful to you,
your favour
has ensured
the death of Rādhā's son
on the battlefield.

44 O Govinda-Krishna!
Fortune-favoured are we to have won,
fortune-favoured
our enemy Karṇa is dead,
fortune-favoured that Pāṇḍu's son
Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna is victorious.

45 O mahā-long-and-strong-
armed one!
We have spent thirteen years
of waking misery.
By your grace we will sleep
peacefully tonight."

46 In this way (continued Sṛñjaya),
Dharmarāja rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
sang the praises
of people-punishing
Janārdana-Krishna
and finest-of-the-Kauravas Arjuna.

47 Seeing Karṇa and his sons
killed by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
felt as if
he was born again.

48 Mahārāja! Overjoyed,
all the Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes
surrounded rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
adding
to his happiness.

49 Mahārāja!
Nakula and Sahadeva,
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara
Pāṇḍava Bhīma, Sātyaki,
and all the finest
Vṛṣṇi chariot-heroes,

50 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin,
the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas
and Sṛñjayas offered pūjā-respect
to Kaunteya-Arjuna
after he killed the charioteer's son
Sūtaputra Karṇa.

51 Enthused with victory,
flushed with success,
the skilled-in-battle warriors
fulsomely felicitated
the dharmātmā
king Yudhiṣṭhira,

52 And chanted the praises also
of the two foe-crushers
Krishna and Arjuna;
after which,
the mahā-chariot-heroes
retired to their camps.

53 It was your wrong policy,
O rājā,
that led to this horrendous,
mahā-horripilating carnage.
No use regretting
and lamenting over it now.

54 When he heard these harsh words
(said Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā's son rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
lost consciousness
and toppled like a tree
on the floor.

55 And far-seeing Gāndhārī devi
fell similarly
on the floor, and lamented
loud and long
the death of Karṇa
on the field of battle.

56 Vidura and Sañjaya helped
the king and queen to recover,
and did their best
to console
the profound grief
of the royal couple.

57 The Kaurava ladies came
and attended
to Gāndhārī.
Taking fate and inevitability
to be above all else,
the king,

58 A man of mahā-tapasyā,
was near-senseless with grief.
Delusion dulled his feelings,
making him insensitive
to the ministrations
of Vidura and Sañjaya.

59 O descendant of Bharata!
Whoever reads or listens
to the mahā-battle between Karṇa
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
gets all the fruits
of a perfectly performed ritual sacrifice.

60 Eternal Bhagavān Viṣṇu
Is Sacrifice personified – so say
Fire, the Moon, and the Sun.
Who reads or listens to this story
Without ill-will, traverses all the worlds
And is always happy.

61 Who recites this excellent,
Merit-filled story finds wealth and health,
Fame and joy, provided he recites
It with bhakti.
This cannot be doubted.
About this, there is no uncertainty.

62 Supremely happy is the person
Who listens to this story –
Finest of all persons is such a one.
Self-born Svayaṁbhū-Brahmā,
Viṣṇu and Bhava-Śiva
Are happy with such a one.

63 Reading it, a Brahmin obtains
The wisdom of the Vedas,
A Kṣatriya strength and victory,
A Vaiśya gains opulent wealth,
And a Śūdra becomes free
Of physical ailments.

64 In this story is the glorification
Of Eternal Bhagavān Viṣṇu.
Happy is the person who studies it,
For he attains all that he desires.
Such is the power of the words
Of mahā-muni Vyāsa.

65 Who listens to a recitation
Of the Karṇa Parva obtains
The same merits as are obtained
By a person who every day
For a whole year gifts Kapilā cows
Along with their calves.

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttural	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttural-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttural-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

CONTENTS

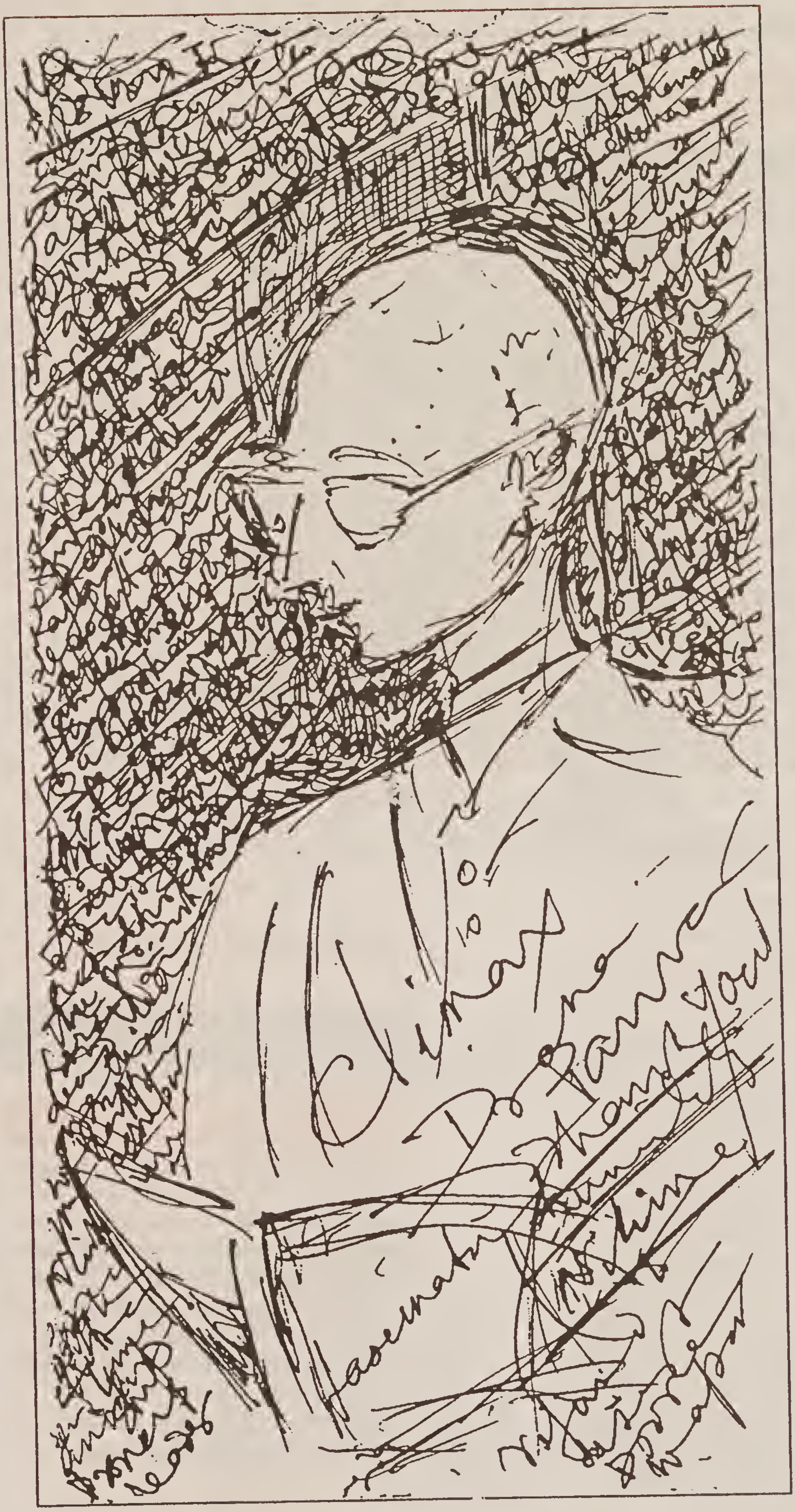
CANTO VIII

Karṇaparva

The Chronicle of War : Book Three

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)



P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar



One of the works of Kinkar Ghosh displayed at Birla Academy of Art and Culture

READING SESSION

GD Birla Sabhagar

Professor PLal reads Sanjaya's report to raja Dhritarastra of Krishna and Arjuna going to Yudhisthira, leaving Bhima to battle with the Kauravas on Kuruksetra, and Arjuna seeking Yudhisthira's permission to kiil Karna after confessing that he has been unable so far to counter Karna's war-skills, in the 415th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's complete *Mahabharata*, presented by Sanskriti Sagar on March 9 at 11 am. P Lal reads his *Mahabharata* also daily on Tara TV Newz at 6.50 am and Tara Musiz TV at 5.50 am.

THE TELEGRAPH

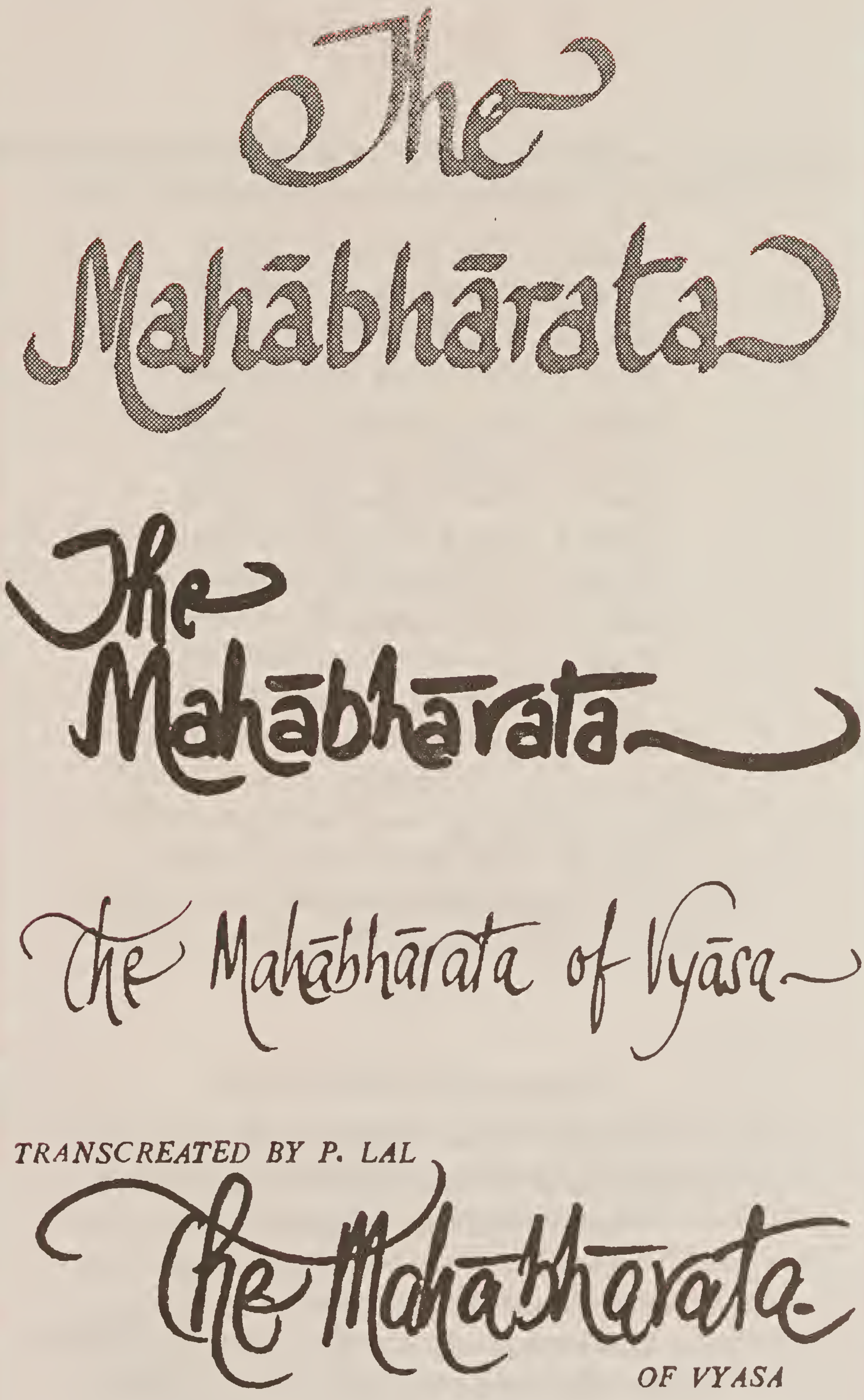
READING

■ **March 9 at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11 am:** Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's report of Krishna and Arjuna going to Yudhisthira, leaving Bhima to battle the Kauravas, and Arjuna seeking Yudhisthira's permission to kill Karna, after confessing his inability to match Karna's war skills, in the 415th weekly session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The Sunday Statesman

ENGAGEMENTS

- Prof P. Lal reads from his English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G D Birla Sabhagar; 11-00



The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

ॐ The Mahābhārata

Appearing in single-volume format from WRITERS WORKSHOP
The Complete Mahābhārata transcreated by P. Lāl

Book 1 : The Ādi Parva (2005)
Book 2 : The Sabhā Parva (2005)
Book 3 : The Vana Parva (2005)
Book 4 : The Virāṭa Parva (2006)
Book 5 : The Udyoga Parva (2006)
Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2007)
Book 8 : The Karṇa Parva (2007)
Book 9 : The Śalya Parva (2007)
Book 10 : The Sauptika Parva (2008)
Book 11 : The Śtrī Parva (2007-08)
Book 12 : The Śānti Parva (2008)
Book 13 : The Anuśāsana Parva (2008)
Book 14 : The Āśvamedhika Parva (2008)
Book 15 : The Āśramavāsika Parva (2007)
Book 16 : The Mausala Parva (2006)
Book 17 : The Mahāprasthānika Parva (2006)
Book 18 : The Svargārohaṇa Parva (2006)

Appearing from WW in 2007

Prefaces & Notes to Vyāsa's Ādi Parva
Prefaces and Notes to Vyāsa's Sabhā Parva
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śakuntalā Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yayāti Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Mandapāla Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Draupadī-Svayamvara Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Sāvitrī-Satyavān Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Nala-Damayantī Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā



Sketch by P. Lal



Ārya-varta
at the time of the Mahābhārata

Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia*
[University of Minnesota]

The Mahabh

Atr

Soma (Chan

marries De

(The Yadava race)

Yayati marries Devayani

Yadu (& another son Anu)

Vrishni (son)

Devarata (son)

Andhaka (son)

Shura (son)

Vasudeva (son) — Kunti (daughter) marries Pandu

Balarama (son) — Krishna (son) marries Satyabhama — Subhadra (daughter) marries Arjuna

Samba (son of Jambavati)

Abhima[illegible]yu (son)

(Line extinct)

(Satyavat

union with

has so

Vichitravi

by union with a Vaishya woman

Yuyutsu (youngest son)

Dhritarashtra (son by Ambika)

marries Gandhari

Duryodhana & ninetynine sons & a daughter D[illegible]hohala

Pandu

marries

Yudhishthi

Dhar

Bhima (son

Arjuna (son

Arjuna mar

Family Tree

'shi

l) the Moon

l)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

Bharata (son)

Hastin (son)

Kuru (son)

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

e-marriage union with Ganga

Bhishma (son)

sa
her pre-marriage
arashara: Vyasa
wo widows of
ka & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

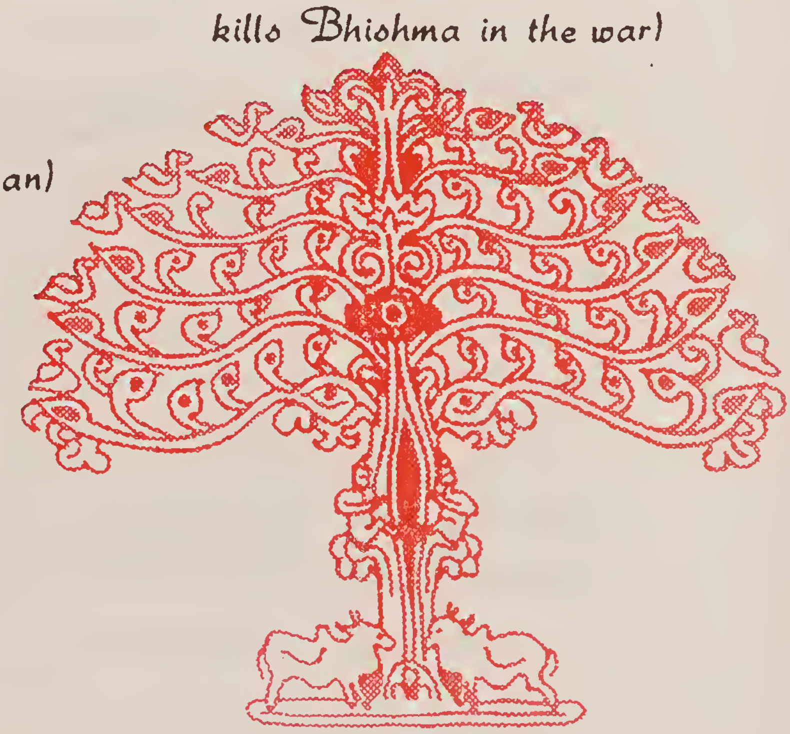
)

dra

nyu (son) marries Uttara

Parikshit (son)

Janamejaya (son)



The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#194-234) of the Karṇa Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and calligraphy fascicules and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspices of the Sanskriti Sagar in the Library of Dharma and Culture at the G.D. Birla Sabhagar in Ko'kata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (February 2008) read 410 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa 21

11 And Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
Is afraid of him निवर्तते सदा मन्दः
And runs away from him ~ सिंहात्
He does, Kuntī's foolish son ~ क्षुद्र मृगो
Like a deer from a lion. यथा

12 Karna is the hero
Who made mahā-powerful
Bhīma who has the strength
Of ten thousand elephants
Get into the same predicament
As any ordinary human.

13 He is the one who
With his invincible śakti
Killed Ghaṭotkaca,
The fiercely-roaring
Māyā-wielding rākṣasa.

14 See that intelligent, truly
dedicated hero on the field
Today, the difficult-to-defeat,
Unrelentingly energetic Karṇa.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa 25

25 Saying this
(said Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Realising how many fine warriors
Had perished, and most
Of his army wiped out,
26 Became confused and depressed.
His mind was in a whirl. मुह्यमानो
In that semi-conscious state
He said:
"Sañjaya!
Stay with me a little.
27 Tāta! Dear one! व्याकुलं मे मनस्तात
This news श्रुत्वा सुमहदप्रियम्
Is mahā-displeasing.
My mind is confused. मनो मुह्यति
My heart is grieving. चाङ्गाणि
My limbs
Are limp न च शक्नोमि
With sorrow." धारितुम्

1

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa
Transcreated from the Sanskrit of Vyāsa

The Karṇa-parvaṇi-parva in the Karṇa Parva

Volume 196

SECTION 9

Session 391
16 Sept. 2007
(Geeta, p. 3773)

In looks
In lineage
In renown
In tapasyā
In knowledge of śruti
(said Sañjaya)
Saints
Have said
You are the equal
Of Nahuṣa's son
Yayāti.

श्रिया
कुलेन
यशसा
तपसा
श्रुतेन च
त्वामद्य सन्तो
मन्यन्ते
ययातिमिव
नाहुषम्

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

7 They sat
On comfortable,
Luxuriously draped seats,
Like gods
Relaxing
On radiant thrones.

8 Rājā Duryodhana
Addressed the brilliant bowmen
Pleasingly, reassuring them
With appropriate words:

9 "Kings!

मतं मतिमतां श्रेष्ठाः
सर्वं प्रब्रूत मा चिरं
एवं गते तु किं कार्यं
किं च कार्यतरं नृपाः

All of you are gifted
With fine, discriminating minds.
Let us not waste time.
Tell me: What is best
For us to do now."

10 Hardly had the Indra-of-men
Spoken than those lions-among-men,
Sitting on their thrones,
Gestured their eagerness to fight.

38 With the rout
Of your entire army ~
All the soldiers fleeing
In all the directions ~
Only Droṇa's son
Aśvatthāman
Dared to launch an attack
On mahā-powerful Bhīma.
39 A gory clash followed
Between the two ~
Like the clash
Between Vṛtra
And Vāsava-Indra
In the war between
The gods and anti-gods.

ततः समागमो घोरो वभूव सहसा तयोः /
यथा देवासुरे युद्धे वृत्रवासवयोरिव ॥

18 On the heads of Arjuna
And Keśava-Krishna.
A bodiless voice
Proclaimed: चन्द्राग्न्यानिलसूर्याणां
"The radiance कान्तिदीप्तिबलद्युती:
of the moon
The dazzle
of fire
The velocity
of wind
The splendour
of the sun —
19 These always
are the signs
Of heroic Arjuna
and Keśava-Krishna.
Seated in one chariot
they are as invincible
As Brahmā himself
and Īśāna-Śivā.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa 7

14 With the gold-ornamented
Arrows of Pārtha-Arjuna
Stuck in his golden armour;
The elephant of Daṇḍadhāra
Glowed like a mountain
With its trees and plants
Aflame in a forest-fire
At dead of night.
Trumpeting
In agony
And roaring
Like a thunder-cloud,
The elephant
Reeled
Tottered
And toppled
With its driver
On the ground
Like a mountain
Riven by a thunderbolt.

यथा चकाशो
निशि पर्वतो
यथा दावाग्निना
प्रज्वलितौ-
षधि द्रुमः

Transcreated by P. Lāl 34

22 O Bharata descendant!
The Kaurava ranks, O rājā,
Were crushed
By Sahadeva
Like a colony of ants
Ground underfoot
By an angry mortal.

पिपीलिकपुटम् राजन् यथा मृद्नन्नरो रुषा।
तथा सा कौरवी सेना मृदिता तेन भारत॥

ॐ

Sections 21-23
of the Karṇa-parvaṇi-parva
of the Karṇa Parva
of the holy Mahābhārata
end here.

Transcreated by P. Lāl 38

31 Mahārāja!
The brave and brilliant
Swordsman Sutasoma
Covered the battlefield
With maṇḍala-patterns
Of dexterous display
Of the fourteen kinds
Of sword-play.
32 Bhrānta - roaming
Udbhrānta - whirling
Āviddha - swinging
Āpluta - jumping
Vipluta - withdrawing
Sṛta - running
Sampāta - rushing
Samudīrṇa - hurling ~
These were some
Of the sword-feats
Demonstrated
By Sutasoma.

30 Looked like
A red chalk cliff
Streaming crimson liquid
After a heavy downpour.
O rājā!
Reaching another
Powerful bow,
31 And nocking it,
Kṛtavarman wounded
Śikhaṇḍin's shoulders
With a volley of arrows.
With the arrows
Sticking in his shoulders,
Śikhaṇḍin looked resplendent
32 Like a mahā-tree
शाखाप्रशाखा- With its wealth
Of branches and twigs.
विपुलः So blood-drenched were
सुमहान् The two heroes, it seemed they
पादपो यथा Had bathed in a sea of blood.

12 Mahā-heroes तौ समाजग्मतुर्वीरौ
Difficult-to-defeat-in-battle भ्रातरौ रथसत्तमौ।
The two
Faced each other ~ समेत्य च महावीरौ
Both brilliant bowmen ~ संरब्धौ युद्धदुर्मदौ॥
Mahā-archers
Showering torrents of arrows.
13 O respect-worthy one!
With a stone-
Sharpened bhalla-arrow
Rājā Duryodhana
Sliced the bow of
Noble Dharmaśīla Yudhiṣṭhira.
14 Unable to endure
That insult, Yudhiṣṭhira's
Anger broke bounds.
Eyes red
With wrath,
He flung aside
His shattered bow,

40 With bowed head
He stood before
Pitāmaha Brahmā,
Narrated all that happened,
And asked how best
To destroy the Daityas.
41 Bhagavān Brahmā listened
And said to the gods:
"Whoever harms you,
Harms me too.
42 They are wicked-ātmaned,
These anti-gods —

अहं हि तुल्यः सर्वेषां ⊛ you,
भूतानां नात्र संशयः। too.
अधार्मिकास्तु हन्तव्या ures
इति मे व्रतमाहितम् ॥

to destroy all
Who indulge in adharma.

⊛

Transcreated by P. Lāl 18

46 O Indra-among-rājās!
Stotra-chants
And Vaṣaṭkāra-chants
And the sacred syllable
ॐ । —
How magnificent they looked, O rājā,
Standing in front!
47 The wondrous Year
And the six seasons
Were his bow,
His own shadow
The bowstring —
Indestructible in battle!
48 Rudra-Śiva
is Kāla.

कालो हि भगवान् रुद्रस्तस्य ⊛'a
संवत्सरो धनुः ।
तस्माद् रौद्रि कालरात्रिर्ज्या
कृता धनुषोऽजरा ॥

⊛ Kāla
in Śiva's
le bowstring.

41 "Son of Gāndhārī!
Duryodhana!
O handsome rājā!
If you are so pleased
To get this done,
Then I will do
What you want to get done.
42 O finest of the Bhāratas!
What I can do,
I will do
With all my heart
Because
You want me to do it.
43 On one condition:
Because I mean well,
You and Karṇa
Must promise to excuse
Whatever I say
To Karṇa,
Pleasant or unpleasant."

यत्तु कर्णमहं ब्रूयां
हितकामः प्रियाप्रिये।
मम तत् क्षमतां सर्वं
भवान् कर्णश्च
सर्वशः॥

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa 35

35 O learned one! विद्वन्
Listen to me
And keep silent,
For I have more to say.
Women who get drunk—
They strip and dance वासांसि उत्सृज्य
36 And start having sex नृत्यन्ति स्त्रियो
And don't know
when to stop. या मद्यमोहिताः
How can the son मैथुनेऽसंयताश्चापि
Of such a woman
Advise others तासां पुत्रः कथं धर्मं
On what is dharma? मद्रको
37 These women urinate वक्तुमर्हति
Like she-camels
And she-asses.
They are विभ्रष्टधर्माणाम्
devoid of dharma
They are निर्लज्जानाम्
utterly shameless.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa
Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lal

The Karṇa-parvaṇi-parva in the Karṇa Parva

Volume 209

Session 404

SECTION 41 23 Dec. 2007

(Sita, p. 3881)

1 O respectworthy monarch!
(continued Sañjaya)
Adhiratha's son
delighting-in-battle Karṇa
Was heard out by Śalya ⊛
⊛ opinion.

मारिषाधिरथेः श्रुत्वा वाचो
युद्धाभिनन्दिनः।
शल्योऽब्रवीत् पुनः कर्णं
निदर्शनमिदं वचः॥

in a dynasty
king-in-battle
of rajas.
dedicated
dharma.

6 Transcreated by P. Lāl [VIII: 44:8-11]

8 NARAHARI'S BHAKTI-RATNĀKARA gives
350 headings under which the emotion
of love can be classified.

REDUCED TO TWENTY

1. पूर्वराग first love – desire for the presence of the other – child for its mother's arms
2. वत्सलता calf-love – 1st shoots (calf for another calf)
3. प्रेम – gentle + pure love – no sexual desire

9 4. प्रीति – fondness + joy in another's presence; an intellectual love
5. स्नेह – a demonstrative affection
6. रुचि – wish to please or shine before the other
7. मन्मथ – agitation: stirrings of deeper layers of love
8. मनसिशय – mind-embedded: constant longing
9. हार्द – heart-penetrating; on verge of physical desire.

10 10. स्मर – mind-heart-body preoccupied with beloved
11. राग – रम – प्रणय – stirrings of sexual love
12. माधुर्य – honeyed love; kissing, caressing; pre-sexual
13. कन्दर्प – wanton love अनुराग – अनुरक्ति – lustful attraction
14. काम – craving, erotic love, eager for sexual experience
15. शृंगार – 'horny' love: desire for close physical contact
16. रति – desire, lust for sexual union

11 17. मदन – 'rutting' – तृषा – 'thirst' – greedy, torturing desire
18. मैथुनज्वर – intercourse-fever –
19. लालसा – desire to reach consummation: 'moist-desiring'.
20. युति – union, oneness, simultaneous physical ecstasy

They are an indecent lot.

12 Their women flaunt garlands and
ornaments and get drunk
and dance and sing naked
out in the open. गायन्ति अथ च
नृत्यन्ति स्त्रियो मत्ता विवाससः

13 They bray like she-donkeys and
whinny like camels.
They have sex with all. अनावृता मैथुने
They do as they please. ता कामचाराश्च
सर्वशः

14 Drunk, they exclaim, "O you poor
hurt thing! O you
exploited unfortunate! O you
with a dead husband!"

15 And they go on dancing merrily
even on sacred festival days.
One of these wicked Bāhīka men ~
a resident of Kurujāṅgala ~

93 Please yourself if you will
with lovely words.
The truth is that Arjuna
is invincible.
Better make other plans
if you must.

अथवा परितोषस्ते uth
वाचोक्त्वा सुमना भव । arms,
न स शक्यो युधा ll creatures
जेतुम् अन्यं कुरु मनोरथम् ॥ gods
oown from ~ in ~
that man might defeat Arjuna
on the battlefield.

95 Look, the mahā-muscled hero,
Arjuna, the fearsome son
of Kuntī, stationed there like
the radiant Meru mountain!

102 O bull-brave Bharata!
So many drenched
in blood, drinking blood,
choked with blood!
Chariots, horses, men,
weapons, ornaments,

लोहितस्य तु गन्धेन ⊛
स्पर्शेन च रसेन च।
रूपेण चातिरक्तेन
शब्देन च विसर्पता॥

in
em

blood.

104 Smell, touch, rasa-taste ~
full of blood! ⊛
Feel of blood,
sight of blood,
gush of blood,
everywhere red blood

79 O rājā, and I was afraid,
and I thought:
This is the end for them;
their life is over.
Seeing those anger-driven,
energetic heroes,

80 My fear increased. I thought:
What will happen now?
O rājā! The mahā-chariot-heroes
of the Pāṇḍava
and Kaurava armies
continued to assault
each other's ranks
with sharp arrows.

अभवन् मे भयं तीव्रं कथं एतद् भविष्यति
ततस्ते पाण्डवा राजन् कौरवाश्च महारथाः
ततक्षुः सायकैस्तीक्ष्णैः निघ्नन्तो हि परस्परम्

 Transcreated by P. Lāl [VIII:152:3-5]

3 Gadā - maces
parigha - spiked iron clubs
kaṇapa - spears
prāsa - barbed darts
bhindipāla - slicers
bhuṣuṇḍi - pellet ejecters ~

4 We saw them all in that
horrendous clash.
A rain of arrows fell like
a swarm of locusts.

5 Elephants clashed
with elephants
with murderous ferocity. (*)

नागान्‌ नागाः समासाद्य
व्यधमन्त परस्परम्‌।
हया हयांश्च समरे
रथिनो रथिनस्तथा॥

(*) Horses charged horses, chariot-fighters charged chariot-fighters.

(*) heroes.

[transcriber note removed]

19 Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna
advanced to where
rājā Suyodhana-Duryodhana
was stationed.
Bypassing Mādrī's brave twins,
both mahā-chariot-heroes,

20 Dhṛṣṭadyumna targeted
your son Duryodhana
with his arrows.
Your supremely
self-confident son,
roused to revenge,

21 Your bull-brave son,
smiled and shot
twenty-five arrows at
Dhṛṣṭadyumna of Pāñcāla.
Again, your supremely self-
confident, revengeful son

25 Appeared on the field
to be the charred remains
of a smokeless fire.
The shattered remains too
of chariots once tinkling
with golden kiṅkiṇi-bells,

26 Their horses slain by arrows,
with guts and marrow
oozing out on the field...
Anukarṣa-chariot-axles,
upāsaṅga-chariot-fixtures,
pennants, vivid war-flags,

27 And white mahā-conches
of the charioteers
lay like rubbish on the field.
Their tongues ripped out
and bleeding, hill-huge elephants
slept an eternal sleep.

86 O Pārtha-Arjuna! Your
elder brother Bhīma,
with his sharp arrows,
has shredded Vaijayantī
war-flags and felled
forty-nine elephants.

87 Each elephant he killed with
ten nārāca-arrows.
The victory-shouts of the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra are silent,

88 O bull-brave Bharata,
with the return
of infuriated Bhīma,
whose prowess is like
that of city-destroying
Purandara-Indra.

23 Released a volley
of fifty sharp arrows
at Karṇa.
A horrendous sight!
Pitch-dark with arrows,
the whole battlefield!

24 O lord of the world!
O respectworthy monarch!
When Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
began his attack,
your soldiers broke into
screams of "Hai! Hai!"

25 Kaṅka-feathered arrows
exceedingly sharp shafts
various bhalla-arrows
śakti-spears
ṛṣṭi-swords
musala-clubs ~

19 Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna
Responded with
A fierce swarm of arrows
And sliced the bow
Of Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman.

20 His bow shattered,
Droṇa's son picked up
A thunderbolt-like
Parigha-spiked-iron-club
And hurled it at
Diadem-decorated Kirīṭin-Arjuna.

21 O rājā!
Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna saw
The Jambu-nada-gold-decorated
Spiked iron club
Whirling towards him,
And he smiled,
And disintegrated it in mid-air.

4 O Indra-among-men!
Like a lead elephant
attacking a lion,
he pounced upon me,
sure he would win.
His aim, mahārāja,
was to save the Kauravas
whom I had targeted
for particular slaughter.

5 O Bharata descendant!
Later, that valiant
finest of the Kauravas,
that hard-to-subdue
son of the ācārya
shot arrows at me
and Janārdana-Krishna,
arrows that spat
poison and fire.

7 Why are you clutching your
mahā-sword so fiercely?
Answer me, brave one!
I am asking you!
Son of Kuntī, what is it
you want to do,

8 O mahā-wonderful hero,
by losing your temper
and brandishing your sword?"
He heard these words
of Krishna and, looking
at Yudhiṣṭhira,

9 Arjuna, angrily,
hissing like a snake,
said to Govinda-Krishna:
"If anyone dares
tell me, 'Hand over your
Gāṇḍiva-bow,'

SECTION 171

1 Listening to these pleasing words
of Dharmarāja Yudhisthira,
(continued Sañjaya) the pride-of-
the-Yādavas Dharmātmā
Govinda-Krishna turned
to Pārtha-Arjuna.

2 Because he had spoken bitterly
to Yudhisthira
at Krishna's urging, Pārtha-Arjuna
was profoundly depressed.

3 Seeing him in that state,
Vāsudeva-Krishna smiled
and said to Pāndava Arjuna:
"Such sadness! — because
Pārtha-Arjuna said 'you' not 'thou'!
Suppose Dharma's son

73 By him. He toppled
the drivers of elephants,
he unchariotted mahā-
chariot-heroes, unhorsed
horse-riders, unweaponed
foot-soldiers.

74 That bull-shouldered
enhancer of Kaurava
and Vṛṣṇi glory
oppressed the
combined forces of
the mahā-chariot-heroes,

75 And despatched humans,
horses and elephants
to the realm of Yama.
The arrows of
Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu
burnt the enemy ranks.

57 On one of my palms
are signs of arrows,
on the other the sign
of a fully-stretched bow.
On the soles of my feet
a chariot and war-flag.
A warrior who goes
to the field with these signs
can never be beaten."

58 Having said these words,
the second-to-none hero,
foe-destroying Arjuna,
eyes blazing with anger,
advanced to the battlefield,
determined to rescue
his brother Bhīma
and sever the head
of Karṇa.

26 Mahārāja! Anticipating
the imminent arrival
of Pārtha-Arjuna, Bhīma
without fear of life
started slaughtering
your warriors.

27 Son of the wind-god Vāyu,
valiant wind-swift
Bhīma began a display
of prowess
by whirling on the field
like the wayward wind.

28 Mahārāja!
O Indra-among-rājās!
O lord of the earth!
Your army was like
a battered ship
on a stormy ocean.

36 You grievously wounded
Dharmarāja Yudhisthira
and unchariotted him.
Śikhaṇḍin,
Sātyaki,
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna,

37 Draupadī's sons,
Yudhāmanyu, Uttamaujas,
and the twin brothers
Nakula and Sahadeva
have also suffered grievously
at your hands.

38 Foe-tormenting
Pārtha-Arjuna, with
anger-filled bloodshot eyes,
is leaving all the
other earth rulers and
heading towards you.

16 Uttamaujas, Janamejaya,
infuriated Yudhāmanyu,
and Śikhandin and
Pārṣata-Dhṛṣṭadyumna ~
all of them together,
roaring their war-cries,
discharged their arrows
and succeded in wounding
their enemy Karṇa.

17 The objects of the senses
can never dislodge
the man who is stable
in the strength of his ātman.
And so the five Pāñcālas,
splendid chariot-heroes,
despite all their best efforts,
failed to dislodge
Karṇa from his chariot.

37 Infuriated by this,
the valiant warrior,
mahātmā Vṛṣasena,
seeing the two Pāṇḍava
mahā-chariot-heroes
safe in one chariot,
released a volley
of arrows at them,
aiming to kill both.

38 When the chariot of Nakula,
son of Pāṇḍu,
was destroyed, and his sword
shattered by arrows,
a host of Kauravas
gathered their forces
and fired a systematic
shower of arrows
on the two Pāṇḍavas.

42. But Bhūmi the earth-goddess,
like a mother
for a son, wished victory
for Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Mountains and oceans
and rippling rivers,

43 Trees and plants were all for
diadem-decorated
Kiriṭin-Arjuna.
O foe-crushing hero!
Antigods and Yātudhānas
and Guhyakas

44 Delightedly took the side
of Karṇa.
Munis, Cāraṇas,
Siddhas,
Vinatā's descendants
the Garuḍas, birds,

Transcreated by P. Lāl [VIII:188:6-7]

6 Exceedingly sharp arrows ~
shrouded them both,
and shrouded the sky,
and shrouded the armies.
And when your warriors
and the enemy warriors
were so encompassed
with darkness that they
could see nothing,

7 Then fear took hold of them,
and they ran for shelter
to Arjuna or Karṇa ~
an incredible sight
all over the field.
East-wind and west-wind
clashing and collapsing ~
likewise their weapons
clashed and collapsed,

12 Spellbound they stood,
the warriors of both armies,
seeing the two heroes,
resolute and formidable,
battling each other
in a fearsome combat
that kept wavering
this way or other
on the field of battle.

13 O Indra-among-men!
The beings who observed
this battle between Karṇa
and Partha-Arjuna
from the vantage of inter-space
of sky and heaven
shouted: "Bho! Karṇa!
Sādhu! Arjuna!
Excellent! Excellent!"

5 What happened to your dharma
when rājā Duryodhana,
acting on your advice,
fed poisoned food
to Bhīma, and had him stung
by venomous serpents?

6 Son of Rādhā!
What happened to your dharma
when you arranged
to burn down the Pāṇḍavas
when they were sleeping
in the lacquer-house?

7 And when Duḥśāsana, in the sabhā,
was molesting Kṛṣṇā-
Draupadī, who was in her period,
and you openly
made fun of her, what happened
to your dharma, Karṇa?

58 Spreading terror in the ranks
Of their enemies, the Kauravas,
By twanging the bowstring
And slapping arm-pits, ape-flagged
Arjuna and finest-of-birds-
Garuḍa-flagged Krishna ~

59 Both of immeasurable prowess ~
Joyfully placed two excellent
Conches to their mouths and blew
Loudly, terrifying their enemies.
Two finest of men, and two
Snow-white, gold-inlaid conches,

60 The Pāñcajanya and the
Devadatta, both
of profound sound
that reverberated
in the earth, the sky,
and the ten directions.

12 Then, with the permission
of those brave heroes,
Govinda-Krishna
drove Pārtha-Arjuna
to the military camp
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 That tiger-among-rājās
was relaxing
on a golden bed.
Both happily and
respectfully touched
his feet.

14 Seeing them so cheerful,
Yudhisthira surmised
Rādheyā-Karṇa was dead.
He rose from the bed.
Tears of joy
brimmed in his eyes.

Corrections

THE DROṆA PARVA

I am grateful to Pradip Bhattacharya for the following corrections.

Page	*Line*	*Read*
11	2	head
14	3	cried
14	1	heavy poisonous snake-sighs
15	2	at
26	5	may
29	4	Śāntanava
33	3	troops in battle formation
44	1	gave
57	4	Vasudeva's
110	3	radiated
125	1	Powerful
189	2	Led by
189	3	charioteer
194	4	Abhimanyu
197	1	warriors called each
216	4	said to Rudra
218	1	chariot-frame
218	1	Smiling
223	2	ocean seized by a mahā sea-monster
232	2	the Magadha-ruler and his son
234	1	reins and horses
236	1	Deprived of his
251	1	Rudra Hara
278	2	Ilavila
283	2	Sarasvatī
289	1	Gaya's
300	1	In each
306	3	reached their camps
306	2	saw the camp
317	4	Arjuna
319	4	use tamarind twig to clean teeth
320	2	give to
321	1	anti-
334	4	grieving
347	3	Kuntī's
354	1	Kumāra
361	3	minstrels
384	6	earth
385	1	Nivātakavacas
411	3	Śrutāyu
414	3	Śrutāyusa (Srutayudha is killed p. 406)
420	2	Pannaga
434	4	on
468	1	Confounded
509	4	no
510	1	obstacle
519	3	Dāruka's younger brother was
547	1	splintered at the grip
553	4	pierced
560	5	who
564	4	be
569	4	feathered
569	1	śabaras
570	3-4	Arjuna's rear guard (pṛṣṭhagopta) pass
608	3	Pāñcālas
620	3	iron
649	3	remarkable (vicitra) armour
655	4	mine arrows
667	5	gold ornamented armour
672	1	wounding
673	1	Frustrated
688	4	spellbound
689	3	earring
720	3	pause
738	3	monkey (*playangam*)
748	2	Omit (flesh-armoured one)
748	4	Bībhatsu
751	2	Bībhatsu
754	8	Seven
780	7	fought
825	4	havoc
827	1	Hunter-like
843	5	fate
844	5	fate
854	5	them
861	2	boon

Page	Line	Read	Page	Line	Read
864	7	team	1117	6	Maces
873	8-9	adamantine	1142	4	him not hurl
906	2	Pratīpa's son	1149	6	returned
908	2	Śatacandra	1151	5	upraised
910	5	blood-red	1155	1	teeming
913	4	hands	1167	2	you
916	7	fancy (*manoratha*)	1170	1	your
919	4	brothers	1170	2	us
970	5	back	1184	4	lacerated
976	3	Prithā's	1186	12	Grasped
979	4	Śinī'a	1190	4	delightedly
983	4	descendant	1215	4	he
1008	5	trees	1229	1	Shield
1010	5-6	in the Tārakāmaya war	1259	6	Śāradvati
1014	4	Delete (repeated in sl.6, line 1)	1282	7	your
			1285	1	dreadful
1030	9	Vāsavasya	1287	4	In
1038	5	blocked	1290	1	Insert "Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:"
1043	2	Savyasācī	1294	4	Armless Bhūriśravas
1063	1	Karṇa	1295	2	Despite
1068	5	storm	1296	3	molest/torture/abuse(*pariklista*)
1071	7	sunken			
1072	3	stubby	1308	1	Dismount
1081	1	calm	1310	4	pulverise
1087	6	wolves	1338	6	loves
1099	3	muscled	1339	5	Bībhatsu
1103	5	*parigha*	1367	2	shaven
1105	4	barbed	1374	5	Trayambaka
1113	2	charioteer	1382	11	Cāndramā

Reading VAIKARTANA-KARṆA

A Note by P. Lal

(See p. 1505 of Volume 6 : Droṇa Parva)

Some translators render "Vaikartana" as "Vikartana's son". Since Vikartana is an appellation of Sūrya, Vikartana's son is Karṇa. "Vikartana" literally means "deprived". The sun-god Sūrya's wife is Saṁjñā, the daughter of the world-artificer Viśvakarman. Because she was unable to absorb the full radiance of Sūrya, Viśvakarman sliced Sūrya on his lathe, depriving him of an eighth of his incandescence. (The remaining fragments provided the weapons of the gods: Viṣṇu's *cakra*, Siva's trident, Kārttīkeya's lance, Agniveśa's fise-missile etc.) Vikartana is the name of Sūrya, because he was "deprived" of an eighth of his radiance. Since no one knows of Karṇa's "illegitimate" birth and flesh-ear-rings and armour, the subtle way of Vyāsa is to use the literal meaning of "Vikartana" as deprived, for everyone does know that Karṇa gifted away his flesh-armour to a Brahmin; for which reason he is "flesh-armow-deprived!"

Corrections

THE THE BHĪṢMA PARVA

I am grateful to Pradip Bhattacharya for the following corrections.

p.51, 9.56: 'Pārśva, Romāṇh' not 'pārśvaroma'
p.284, sl 9-16 missing in devanagari. Has sl. 17-24 repeated on p.286
p.365 sl.54, line 2: Nākulaih=son of Nakula not 'forces of Nakula'.
p.372 sl.30 last line: Droṇam maheshvāsam gāngeyasya priye ratam: Droṇa, eager to do Gāngeya's pleasure
p.474 sl. 14 1.1: 'he who is most powerful', not 'you who are powerful'
1.2: 'who carries', not 'who carry'
p.480 sl. 11 1.3: agrajam sarvabhutānām: 'first of all creatures' not 'the first-born life-essence'.
p.504 sl.23 1.4: 'defence-designed' not found in original.
p.545 sl.28 1.1 : 'his' not 'this'
p.546 sl.41, 1.3: 'aghast' not 'aghust'.
p.565, sl.40: 'elsewhere' not 'eleswhere'
p.565, sl.40.1.4: 'Subhadra's' not 'Subbadra's'
p.582, sl.17, 1.1:add 'cruel' [kruro] before Dhrstadyumna
p.626, sl.24, 1.1: 'Daśārṇa' not 'Daśāma'
p.628, sl.40, 1.3: 'Daśārṇas' not 'Darsarnas'
p.648, sl.12, last line: 'Uttarā' not "Uttara".
p.707, sl.96, 1.1: 'Gadagraja' not 'Gadagaja'.
p.721, sl.9, 1.2: 'cub' not 'club'
p.724: sl.34 1.4: Duhshasana 5 arrows shot at Arjuna, but in sl. 35 3 arrow jut from forehead. Copy of what he did to Ashvatthama.
p.767, 117.64, 1.1: Bhishma withdraws his 'pāvakopamam', agni-like missile, not 'agni-missile'.
p.770, 118.27, 1.1 and 1.3: 'Śatānīka' not 'Śantānīka'.
p.796, 120.59, 1.2: "burn these arrows with me' not 'I will take these arrows with me.'
p.800, sl.23, 1.3: 'Parjanya' not 'Pārjanya'
p.800, sl.28, 1.3-4: 'waving' not 'flapping'; 'upper-garments' (uttariya) not 'body-garments'.
p.805, sl.8, 1.2: 'know' not 'knew'

Corrections

THE BHĪṢMA PARVA

I am grateful to John Chapman for the following corrections.

Page	*Line*	*Read*
6	22	and 11.
8	4	You
8	31	disappointment[?]
10	27	Eliot tells us
33	21	Possesses all
35	10	ether
37	20	this
61	20	carefully:
77	5	your sons
84	2	seemed
101	11	you are the deep
131	57	sorrow
201	12	raksasas
201	17	Rk
229	36	Arjuna said:
235	footnote	Gita which
313	100	die.”
314	4	clamour
319	15	Abhimanyu’s flagstaff and overpowering the charioteer of Abhimanyu.
325	69	humiliating
326	80	apart
329	21	gold-plated
329	22	chariot-heroes.
348	74	sundered
349	84	“Hai! Hai!”
355	16	and Indra’s younger brother Krishna/whose wrathful purpose
358	39	down from
358	39	Sankha’s
394	109	Your pita
400	43	Arjuna,
405	27	turning
407	7	commanded
424	96	Gandiva-like
428	121	banners
449	13	overturned
454		“livid readied furry”–correct?
463	19	for misdeeds
473	8	being known
484	18	Narayana.”
491	19	Everywhere
494	20	attacked Kiritin-Arjuna
497	2	arrows
500	25	Bhisma severed Bhima’s
510	36	ordered by
517	14	its teeming
521	27	destroy me.’
521	29	through
521	29	battle.”
530	21	twenty-five [or] twentyfive
532	5	your eyes
534	18	infuriated
535	33	mutilated
537	51	uncontrollably
539	3	your son
544	20	was ear-splitting
552	46	in front
553	57	counter-attacked
554	61	Vṛṣaka.
557	23	brothers
557	23	in your army
557	24	like a man
557	25	flag-bedecked
558	36	gold-feathered
560	50	straight-shooting
566	54	and
579	45	flesh-eating
584	34	with elephant-tusk
585	39	vociferously
588	32	lord of
596	15	embraced his
600	54	thousand
603	74	shape
613	39	shredded Jayadratha’s
614	4	their
625	14	maha-owerful raksasa.
634	8	maha-muscled
637	35	wolf terrifying
637	37	hos own

Page	*Line*	*Read*	*Page*	*Line*	*Read*
639	59	sight	767	1	never-retreating
640	71	gold-covered[?]	774	12	chariot-hero
643	10	very eyes	778	48	his adversaries
652	51	[add period to last line]	779	52	Bhisma
664	26	Indra-among-raksasas.	804	55	later.
676	36	Flags its trees on the banks	804	2	arrowy bed
680	21	charioteer	805	10	Krsna
683	5	task	810	Vowels lines 1, 2, 5, 6	
689	22	their heroic	misaligned		
690	34	you!		with Devanagari characters	
702	51	quickly	821	125	Volume by
710	10	they strategically	892	2	VOLUME IV
711	11	advanced	893	2	VOLUME V
711	16	such	904	20	lose
713	29	long-stemmed	913	footnote	boloji.com
746	11	wanted his enemies to	913	"	form
752	18	rage,	920	3	notes
761	20	Repulsed,			

IMPORTANT CORRECTIONS

THE ĀDI PARVA (P. 597)

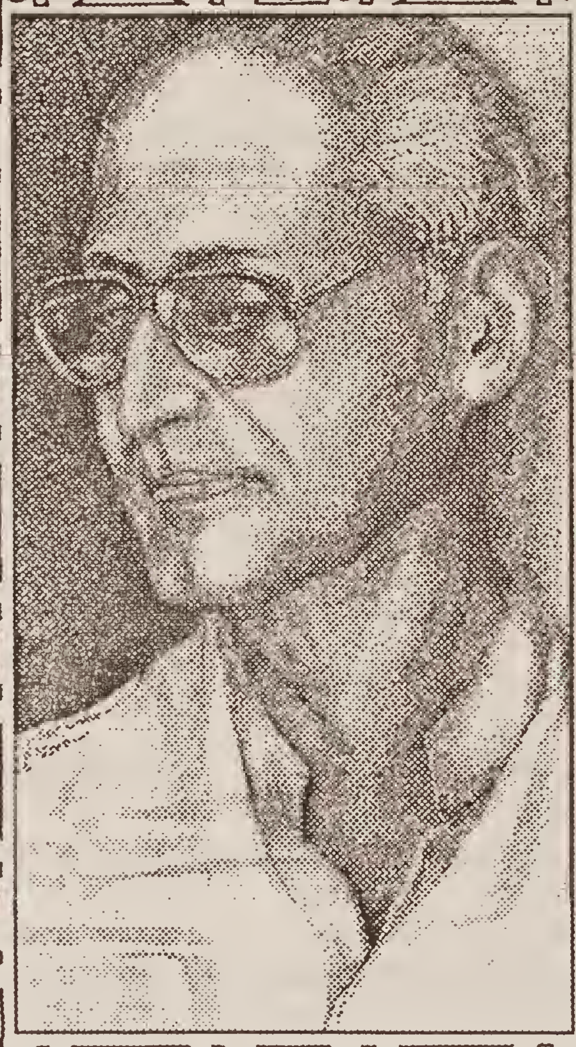
The first śloka has been wrongly printed. The correct sloka is:

Vaiśampāyana said:
That valiant man of tapasyā,
Pāṇḍu, practised penance
and endeared himself to the assembly
of Siddhas and Cāraṇas.

THE ĀDI PARVA (P. 770)

Śloka 18 should read as follows:

Saying this, the citizens half-circled
the Pāṇḍavas in pradakṣiṇa,
and after giving them their blessings,
they returned to the city.



KUNTI PERSONIFIES MOTHER EARTH

S M Bhasker

Science tells us that planet earth is a living being. But an imminent ecological cessation due to the reckless plundering of earth's assets finds humanity facing the challenge of saving the planet.

To put the earth we inhabit in true perspective, Ved Vyasa personified the earth as Kunti in the epic Mahabharata. As a young girl Kunti was granted a boon by sage Durvasa that she could invoke any God or celestial being by chanting a sacred mantra. The God so summoned shall beget her a child equal to him in glory.

Kunti was fascinated by the rising sun. In the aura of the sun she saw a handsome man adorned with divine armour and brilliant earrings. Remembering Durvasa's sacred mantra, she addressed it to the sun God Surya Dev who at once appeared in his glowing celestial robes. The sun God touched her navel and by the power of anima, entered her body. She gave birth to a son called Karna. The child also wore armour (kavacha) and earrings (kundala).

In Sanskrit, Kum-ti means the earth. Kunti's other name is Pritha, meaning Prithvi or the earth. Life originated on earth with the help of the sun's rays. Vegetation was born. Karna literally means grain with chaff. He represents seed, the essence of the vegetable kingdom. But a seed cannot sprout without water. Kunti placed the child in a basket in the waters of the river Aswa. Karna was found and brought up by Adhirath, a charioteer, who lived by the banks of the river. Adhi-rath literally means 'anxiety for body'.

Karna grew up as a great warrior later to be known as Ang-raj, meaning ruler of body, because it is food that sustains the body. The significance of Karna's golden protective armour and earrings can be comprehended from the Sanskrit words, kavacha and kundala. The entire vegetable kingdom has a protective skin or peel, hide or shell, husk or crust. Kavacha in Sanskrit means protective covering and also rind or bark. And fruits hanging from trees look just like earrings or kundalas.

Kunti invoked other celestials using the sacred charm and gave birth to the five Pandavas – Yudhishthira from Dharma, Bhima from Vayu, Arjuna from Indra, Nakul and Sahadev from the Asvins. If Kunti's first-born conceived through the energy of the sun represents the vegetable kingdom, all the five Pandava brothers may be considered to constitute different parts that go to the making of man, the highest manifestation of the animal kingdom.

Yudhisthira represents buddhi; Bhima, mind; Arjuna, prana or breath; and the twins Nakul and Sahadev, arms and legs respectively. They were born one after the other, like the child emerges from the womb, head foremost. First the upper part of the head appears, that is the place of buddhi (Yudhisthira); then the brow, the place of mind (Bhima); then the organs of the senses from the ears downwards through which breath can pass, as through openings (Arjuna), completing the principal parts of man. Then we have arms, followed by legs, which are alike in every part and lie together in the womb; and so they are twins represented by Nakul and Sahadev.

The above interpretation merely seeks to draw attention to the importance of all aspects of the environment for as human beings we have within us elements of all that exists outside of us. The earth (environment) and its inhabitants therefore need to live in mutual harmony.

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A ZERO-SUM GAME: WHERE IGNORANT ARMIES CLASH BY NIGHT

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The Complete Bhishma & Drona Parvas transcreated from Sanskrit by Padma Sri P. Lal, WRITERS WORKSHOP, Calcutta. pp. 928 and 1536. Hardback Rs. 1000 and 1200, flexiback Rs. 800 and 800 with 62 and 97 pages respectively of facsimile reproductions showing the extensive revisions and additions; special limited edition, numbered and signed, with original hand-painted *paṭa-chitra* Rs. 2000 each.

The publication of the P. Lal transcreation of the first two of the five battle-books is an important event. After K.M. Ganguli's prose translation in the late 1890s, followed by M.N. Dutt's replication, the world has not had access to an English version of these in their entirety. J.A.B. van Buitenen passed away without touching them and his successors have, so far, published part of the *Shanti Parva*. The Clay Sanskrit Library's diglot edition has brought out half of the *Drona Parva*. The Lal transcreation stands apart from all others particularly because of none of them dare to set the translations to poetic rhythm, something that comes so naturally to Prof. Lal, who brings to the work a unique Indian flavour by working into the transcreation many Sanskrit words. The great Ganguli had a P.C. Ray to take care of the manifold problems of publishing such a gargantuan work; van Buitenen had the University of Chicago Press; the Clay series has the New York University Press – all well established institutions with trained manpower. Here is another Abhimanyu taking on the awesome challenge of transcreating-and-publishing Vyasa's hundred thousand verses, working through the epic-of-epics steadily, relentlessly.

Reading the first two battle-books together is rewarding because of the varied insights such an approach provides. In the first place, the second book, despite covering half of the duration of the first, is longer by half because the battle is far more sanguinary and varied. Both the Kaurava commanders-in-chief –appointed by Duryodhana reluctantly because of Karna's refusal – are Vyasa's expose of deeply flawed elders and their narrow

dharma. We have here a patriarch who signally fails to provide protection to his foster brother's wife and sons from murderous attacks in childhood and youth. Later, he and the two gurus of the grandnephews remain silent onlookers to the spectacle of a granddaughter-in-law being molested publicly by their employer, the heir-apparent. It is supremely ironic that the prince who earned the sobriquet of "Bhishma" and came to be renowned as the greatest of renouncers should be so hopelessly bound to his father's throne as not only to preside over the suicide of the dynasty, but to actually participate in it on the side he knows to be in the wrong! Indeed, Devavrata-Gangadatta-Bhishma is another Prometheus, bound in adamantine chains to the icy Caucasian peaks of the Hastinapura throne, wracked in immortal agony as the Dhartarashtra-Pandava fratricidal strife eats into his vitals endlessly. For, perversely, he cannot, or will not, die till liberation comes in the form of mortal arrows showered by a grandchild who loves him. And the person whom the Indian government holds up as the model of a guru is one who unhesitatingly indulges in sharp practice to ensure that his son gets exclusive tuition and his favourite pupil is not outdone by a talented tribal; who abandons his calling as a non-violent Brahmin to take up arms to acquire power and pelf for his son–no different from the blind king of Hastinapura in his paternal obsession.

It is in the first war book that both patriarch and guru acknowledge, "I am tied to the Kauravas by need." Bearing out Gandhari's warning to her son in the Udyoga Parva, Bhishma and Drona fight for Duryodhana, but not with their hearts, announcing that they will not kill any of the five Pandavas. Duryodhana is caught in a zero-sum game: he has no option but to appoint them as the commanders-in-chief. His best bet, Karna, sulks Achilles-like in his tents, determined not fight so long as the patriarch is in command. Yet, this same Karna rushes to the fallen Bhishma begging his permission and blessings to fight against his brothers–what a marvellous vignette Vyasa presents us with! Even thereafter, aware that everyone is unlikely to accept his overlordship and for once letting his discrimination prevail over his egotism, he advises that Drona be made supreme commander. Fifteen days pass and every other day Duryodhana's desperation mounts and he berates first Bhishma, then Drona for not killing the Pandavas – all to no avail. He directly indicts the guru (VII.94.14) in gravely insulting terms:

"We ensure your livelihood
Yet you harm us.
I did not know
You are a honey coated razor."

Drona's flawed character is exposed as Sanjaya tells Dhritrashtra that in order to impress Duryodhana (VII.94.40) Drona encased him in golden armour made impervious mantrically. In the duel that follows, Arjuna, unable to pierce this armour, displays his unique bowcraft by wounding Duryodhana's palms and underneath his finger-nails, forcing him to retreat (VII.103.31-32). However, this incident of encasing in magical armour seems to be an interpolation because in sections 116 and 120 Satyaki and in section 124 even Yudhishthira have no problem in wounding his chest so grievously that he is forced to flee the field.

Dhritarashtra's perplexity over the failure of his army provides the reader with interesting information about how it was administered (VII.114): "We treat our soldiers well...Only after passing extensive tests...has their pay been determined, Not because of family connections, personal favour or nepotism. None is conscripted, none is unpaid...we spoke to them sweetly. Not one...has been unfairly treated. Each, according to his ability, gets paid and receives rations...we give presents, we honour them with the best of seats. Even these veteran warriors face defeat."

In the duels with Dhrishtadyumna we are treated to martial acrobatics of a special type as he jumps on to the guru's chariot and rapidly shifts position, foiling all Drona's attacks (VII.97.26-28). Bhima's duel with the guru is also memorable as he overturns Drona's chariot repeatedly–as much as eight times! If he is defeated and spared by Karna (VII.139), he also succeeds in forcing the latter to retreat twice (VII.131, 145) and after Drona's death Karna flees the battlefield out of fear (VII.193.10). The battle for Jayadratha reaches a high point with Arjuna single-handedly holding back the entire army while Krishna refreshes the horses in a hall-of-arrows. Sanjaya exclaims (VII.100.12, 21):

"O Bharata! Krishna, smiling,
stood gracefully in the arrow-hall
created by Arjuna,
as if he was in the midst of women...

In a single chariot, clad in armour,
facing the Kshatriyas,
the two played with our warriors
like children with toys."

As we wade through rivers of blood and gore these 15 days, we notice a gradual breaking down of codes of conduct as the stress mounts steeply. Chariot, cavalry and elephant divisions no longer refrain from attacking infantry and even unarmed charioteers and fleeing soldiers or from killing the charioteer to perplex the chariot-rider. After Bhishma's fall, the battle even carries beyond midnight first by torchlight, then by moonlight, with warriors killing their comrades in the confusion:

"And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

As in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, fathers slay sons, maternal uncles kill nephews and vice-versa. Warriors intervene in duels, attack from behind, many encircle a lone fighter: "Dignity was lost/In that crazed clash" (VII.169.50).

The *Udyoga Parva* had closed with Yudhishthira taking a measure of his strength after hearing from his spies that Bhishma and Drona had announced that each could wipe out the Pandava army in a month, Kripa in two months, Ashvatthama in ten days, Karna in five. He puts the question specifically to Arjuna who claims that using Shiva's weapon he can annihilate all opposition in a flash, but adds that its use is improper against humans. He avoids declaring how many days of normal warfare he would take to defeat the opponents. It is Arjuna's initial assurance that constitutes the backbone of Yudhishthira's morale because he knows full well that Arjuna's fulsome estimate of Virata and Drupada equaling Bhishma and Drona is nothing but bombast. The former was cowed down by Kichaka and routed by the Trigartas, as was the latter by the teenaged Pandavas. Sanjaya exclaims to Dhritarashtra:

O raja! Then erupted the battle
Between the Kauravas and Pandavas
Whose origin was the dice-game,
Whose end was all-embracing doom. –VI.103.44

Planning for a war is one thing; coming face-to-face with the imperative of killing a beloved patriarch and a revered guru is quite another. It is this existential angst that pierces through Arjuna's moral armour, effectively unmanning him and becoming the occasion for the recital of Krishna's *Gita* transcreated by Professor Lal in 1947 in rhymed verse, in 1952 in prose, in free verse in 1965, revised in 1968. Intrigued by Arjuna's uncharacteristic collapse and not finding answers in the *Gita*, he embarked upon the epic journey of transcreating the entirety of Vyasa's composition verse-by-verse. I will skirt this much-commented-upon text and deal with the rest of the parva. Both in VI.51.6 and in the Gita (1.10) there is a verse that remains intriguing. Duryodhana tells Drona that his forces led by Bhishma are "aparyapta", inadequate, while the Pandava army led by Bhima is "paryapta". This has been transcreated as "vast" and "limited", which is to twist the natural meaning of the word. If Duryodhana feels his army is innumerable, why should it be necessary for Bhishma to revive his spirit in the very next verse?

Professor Lal's Preface to the first war-book deals only with the *Gita*, seeing it as the core of the *Bhishma Parva.* Reading it is a gripping experience as the reader follows a sensitive and incisive modern mind grappling with Krishna's recital to extract meaning, savours the delight of the memorably retold parable of the Kalpataru and is surprised by joy to come across gems of insight through a spectrum spanning Vyasa, Dante, T.S. Eliot and Ramprasad Sen. The Preface to the *Drona Parva* is another scintillating piece teasing out the many shades of the guru-chela relationship: neither will harm the other, yet "both must face each other, courtesy of Mahakala". Against the ideal of the guru-shishya bond given in the *Bhagavata Purana*, here Vyasa shows us the ground reality of excruciating dilemmas: Drona trying to balance Arjuna-Ekalavya-Ashvatthama; Bhishma caught between Duryodhana-Karna-Pandavas-Krishna. And was Vyasa himself not the greatest victim of this, asks Prof. Lal, when his son almost drove him to suicide by not following his wishes?

Section 1, verse 7 – describing the vast empty field of battle– is virtually identical to verse 25. The critical edition overlooks this duplication. Historically, Vyasa's reference to icons of gods in 2.26 is of interest, as prior to the epic such references are almost absent.

For making sense of the *divya drishti* gifted by Vyasa to Sanjaya we need not conjure up theories of India having television cameras recording the war. The secret of the supranormal vision is revealed in Vyasa's announcement at the very beginning that none will harm Sanjaya and his access to everything and everyone will be unfettered. In sections 4-12, Sanjaya gives the king a cosmography that the *Vishnu Purana* copies. There is a detailed description of 7 continents (*dvipa*, i.e. land with seas on two sides) with their mountains, the countries (*varsha*) in-between the mountains, 6 oceans. Man is associated with Bharatavarsha, which has 7 ranges, 161 rivers and 228 peoples among whom there is an intriguing reference in 9.56 to Romanah people in the northern region. In 6.14-15 we find a mini-myth of Garuda leaving Meru because all birds there are golden plumaged like him. 8.10 mentions Shandili living at Shringavat, winging us back to Garuda's traumatic meeting with her in the *Udyoga Parva.* However, in 8.16 the reference to Hari's golden chariot of eight wheels has no puranic correspondence. There is a moving reference in 9.5-8 introducing Bharata as a land loved by Indra and 16 famous kings, "all these kings and other powerful Kshatriyas/Have deeply loved the territory of Bharata." Astronomical data provided in these *parvas* are hopelessly garbled and have led to a wide variety of dates being fixed by scholars keen to pin down the date of the war, each claiming to have interpreted the dubious references correctly. Deliberate changes appear to have been made in the data around the time of Devabodha's commentary (mid-18th century CE), each statement conflicting with the others.

Section 13 is virtually a new beginning of the *Bhishma Parva* as though the lesson on geography had not occurred at all. Reverting to the original narrative pattern of the epic, we find Vaishampayana stating that Sanjaya rushed back to the king to announce that Bhishma "lies dead, sprawled on a bed of arrows". This is repeated in section 1 of the *Drona Parva*. In both cases, as well as in Dhritarashtra's extended laments, the references are quite plainly to death and not to awaiting death. Therefore, it is in later times that the concept of Bhishma waiting for the auspicious stellar conjunctions for giving up life was added along with the elaborate *Shanti* and *Anushasana Parvas.* From Day 1 to Day 10, from the 11th day till the death Abhimanyu, then till the 15th evening and from Day 16 till the end of the 17th day, Dhritarashtra had no news till Sanjaya rushed back to report that Abhimanyu, Drona,

Karna and Shalya had fallen. Sanjaya's narration begins from VI.15 stating that "this long-distance hearing and vision, this insight into people's mind and into past and future, this power of flaying in space, this immunity to war-weapons" are his by Vyasa's grace. His presence on the battlefield is testified to in VI.94.46 where he says, "though I and Devavrata kept shouting" at the soldiers not to flee from Ghatotkacha's illusions, they paid no heed. In section 30 of the Drona Parva he mentions hearing the twang of the Gandiva to his right and speaks of joining Drona's division as the Kauravas are beaten back, of facing Chekitana in the field and in section 200 of witnessing Bhima's incredible tackling of Ashvatthama's attack. He is one of the five (the others being Arjuna, Kripa, Krishna and Yudhishthira) who alone saw the ascent of Drona's soul to Brahma's abode (VII.192.57-58). An intriguing bit of information contained in the *Drona Parva* is usually overlooked amid the welter of action: the blind king was not closeted in Hastinapura but was at least sometimes in Kurukshetra. After Abhimanyu's death Dhritarashtra's enquires of Sanjaya why he cannot hear any joyous sounds of dancers, bards and minstrels from the Kaurava camp as he used to while sitting in Somadatta's camp.

Before the battle begins, we are given detailed descriptions of the Kaurava-array led by Bhishma in a white helmet, white armour, under a white umbrella, in a silver chariot with his white palm-tree-symbolled flag fluttering. It is not Arjuna but Yudhishthira who is demoralised, *vishadamagamad*, at the sight of Duryodhana's huge army and, as with Uttara, it is Arjuna who restores his morale, drawing upon on an ancient god-vs-demon battle narrative whose lesson is, "Victory is where Krishna is" (VI.23). The next section is abruptly cut off at the seventh stanza with the exultant adversaries about to clash and the *Gita* begins, continuing till the fifth stanza of section 43. In the sixth *shloka* we find armies surging forward, as though the 20 sections in-between had not occurred, and are treated to a unique spectacle: Yudhishthira steps down armourless and weaponless from his chariot and proceeds on foot to the Kuru elders! Were Arjuna's *vishada* and laying down the bow suggested by this? Each patriarch repeats a formulaic phrase: "a man is the slave of need...I am tied to the Kauravas by need...I say this like a eunuch." Later Drona and Bhishma recall the bread eaten in Duryodhana's house (VI.77.71; 109.29). As with Krishna and Kunti's master stroke of

strategy that succeeded in weakening Karna's animosity, this action of Yudhishthira's wins him a signal moral advantage. By obtaining the blessings of the elders for victory, Yudhishthira fulfils Gandhari's prophetic warning to her son in the *Udyoga Parva* that though the elders may fight for him with their bodies, their hearts and good wishes will ever be with the Pandavas. At this stage Krishna once again approaches Karna, trying to persuade him that since he will not fight so long as Bhishma is alive, he might as well fight on the Pandava side. Karna resolutely refuses to be part of such sophistry and undermine his friend in any way. Then, in a final master stroke aiming at demoralising the enemy, Yudhishthira openly invites defection and succeeds with Yuyutsu, born of a Vaishya handmaid to the blind king, of whom we have not heard anything till now. The reader would expect Vikarna, who spoke up so powerfully against his elders in the dicing match, to have responded instead, but his fraternal loyalty obviously holds, ending finally when Bhima reluctantly kills him. In the *Drona Parva* we suddenly find Dhritarashtra revealing a heroic feature about Yuyutsu that is never mentioned elsewhere: there was a bitter six-month-long battle in Varanavata where he remained undefeated and slew the Kashi king's son, a notorious philanderer (VII.10.58-60). He is specifically mentioned by Krishna as severely rebuking the Kauravas for rejoicing after killing a boy (VII.72.63-67).

Sanjaya, in VI.9.74-75, uses an image that recurs at significant points of the epic, spoken by different protagonists: "Like dogs snarling over a chunk of meat,/These rajas are squabbling over this earth./And they cannot be satiated." The dice-game image is brought in towards the end (VI.115.45): "It was victory or defeat, with Bhishma as the stake,/It was a game of dice played by two armies." Drona shows Duryodhana the battle in terms of the dice-game (VII.130.20-21) with warriors as gamblers, arrows the dice, Jayadratha the pawn.

As with Abhimanyu later, Arjuna is unaware of his son Iravat's death till informed by Bhima and then he tells Krishna that though he may be branded a weakling (VI.96.5, 11):

> "This has been a heinous war…
> all for the sake of wealth…
> we have killed for property!
> Dhik! Shame on the wealth that comes
> from killing kinsmen!...

But this killing of my kinsmen
is not to my liking."

This could be referring to Krishna's reprimand in the Gita. He curses the Kshatriya code and himself again in abject disillusionment after knocking Kripa unconscious:

"Is there anyone
Like me
Hating a Brahmin and an acharya?...
My karma today deserves that hell" (VII.147.16-27).

Following Drona's death, he laments that the little of life left to them will be stained permanently because they killed their guru

"to enjoy briefly a kingdom…
Because I too
Lusted for a kingdom
I failed to prevent
The murder of my guru.
Head lowered in shame,
I will go to hell" (VII.196.46, 53).

This is hardly the Gita's "sthitaprajna" in practice! Arjuna will repeat this sentiment to Duhshala in the *Ashvamedhika Parva* blaming the warrior's way of life in the same terms. In its 15th verse the *Drona Parva* states that the cousins re-examined Kshatriya dharma after Bhishma died, each condemning his *sva-dharma.* This introspection recurs after Abhimanyu's death with Dhritarashtra exclaiming (VII.33.23), "How terrible is this war-code called Kshatriya dharma/that makes power-hungry men kill a small boy!"

In section 23, at Krishna's instance, Arjuna invokes Durga for blessing him with victory, a passage occurring only in the Bengali and Devanagari manuscripts. The episode is repeated at greater length in the *Mahabhagavata Purana* where Krishna is an incarnation of Kali or Bhadrakali (the first appellatives by which Arjuna invokes Durga in the epic passage). Arjuna's invocation resembles that in the *Devi Mahatmya* and markedly differs from Yudhishthira's to Durga in the *Virata Parva,* where she is addressed as Krishna's sister and of Nandagopa's family.

Day 1 goes in favour of Duryodhana. We, who usually shrug the eldest Pandava away as a pacifist, are surprised to find

Yudhishthira complaining to Krishna that Arjuna fights like uninvolved spectator (possibly following the letter, not the spirit of detached karma!), indifferently watching the destruction of own forces. That is when he announces that Dhrishtyadumna will command the Pandava forces and all ponder the meaning of the announcement till he explains that Dhrishtyadyumna is ordained by Shambhu to slay Drona. We now come to know that Drupada's black-magic *abhichara* rite had invoked Shambhu, producing Dhrishtadyumna and Draupadi. Similarly, in the *Drona Parva* we are told that Shikhandi was the result of Shiva's boon to Drupada for a Bhishma-killing son as was Bhurishrava to Somadatta to take revenge on Shini. The shadow of destructive Rudra looms over Kurukshetra. Bhima is specifically compared to Shankar, Rudra, and trident wielding Shiva during his grisly exploits, as is Arjuna repeatedly in his destructive fury. Significantly, Ashvatthama is identified with Rudra, looking forward to the horrific carnage he perpetrates in the *Sauptika Parva.* The climactic touch comes at the end of the *Drona Parva* where Arjuna tells Vyasa that though the opponents thought they were being routed by him, it was really a dazzling male form, trident in hand, who preceded him and created havoc whichever way he turned. Vyasa reveals that this was the primal lord, Ishana-Shankara, carried by Durga in her arms in the form of a babe with five tufts of hair. The myth of Barbarika rings a change on this when his bodiless head tells the Pandavas–who are disputing over who routed the enemies–that he saw the Sudarshana discuss whizzing through the battlefield, beheading thousands, and Draupadi in Kali form running behind, drinking up all the blood.

The first major casualty is Virata's son Shveta who, due to some differences with his father, sought refuge with Pandavas (VI.49.4-5). Shveta must have had some connection with eastern India as the episode is not known beyond a few Bengali and Devanagari mss and the 11th century Old Javanese recension. On the second day there is an interesting elaboration on the charioteer's role and on Bhima's grisly swordsmanship. We learn that eastern India was renowned for its war elephants and had no liking for Krishna and his instruments the Pandavas. The Kalinga and Vanga kings and Bhagadatta of Pragjyotishpura (Assam) are important allies of Duryodhana. The Tamraliptas (today's Tamluk in West Bengal) are clubbed along with *mlecchas* like Shakas, Kiratas, Daradas, Barbaras–all on the Kaurava side. Finding Satyaki unstoppable,

Duryodhana finally turns loose the hill-tribes (Daradas, Tanganas, Khasas, Lampakas, Kulindas) expert in stone-warfare, of which both armies are ignorant (section 121), but Satyaki routs them. Indeed, this *parva* becomes a celebration of Yadava prowess, represented by Abhimanyu and Satyaki who equal Arjuna and Krishna in their battlecraft. Krishna, seeing Satyaki chariotless and about to face Karna, provides him his own chariot driven by Daruka.

On Day 2 Yudhishthira advises adopting the *krauncha* formation, a never before used *vyuha*, and the day goes to the Pandavas. This is the only occasion on which all the conches of the Pandavas are named (VI.51.26-27): Krishna's Panchajanya, Arjuna's Devadatta, Bhima's Paundra, Yudhishthira's Anantavijaya, Nakula's Sughosha, Sahadeva's Manipushpaka. Day 3 sees a breakdown of the codes of battle, which recurs on the 10th day, with confusion prevailing and no quarter given regardless of the status of the opponent. Arjuna uses a celestial missile for the first time: Mahendra, followed by Vayavya and then Aindra. The reason is that Krishna, losing patience with Arjuna's half-hearted fighting, leaps off the chariot and rushes to kill Bhishma, the discuss miraculously appearing in his hand. Without turning a hair, the patriarch welcomes him, glorying in dying at the hands of the Lord of all:

> ehyehi devesa jagannivasa namohastu te madhava
> cakrapaÄe
> prashya maÅ pataye lokanatha rathottamaÅ
> sarvasaraÄya saÅkhye

The incident is repeated on Day 9, where the description is less elaborate and more realistic with Krishna flourishing his charioteer's whip. Bhishma's welcome to Krishna is less exaggerated:

> ehyehi pundarikak¦a devadeva namohastu te
> mamadya satvataœre¦¢ha patayasva mahahave

This later incident must have been the inspiration for a later Vaishanavite composer to insert the episode, with miraculous embellishments, into the third day. Krishna breaks his vow again in the *Drona Parva* when, to save Arjuna, he receives Bhagadatta's Vaishnava missile on his chest, where it turns into a celestial garland. To assuage Arjuna's bruised ego, he recounts the *vyuha*

doctrine of his four-fold existence – a sure indication of interpolation. Following Drona's murder, the infuriated Ashvatthama releases the invincible Narayana missile which is neutralised by Krishna. The name of the weapon and Krishna's intervention bereft of any miraculous transformation indicates that this was the incident on which the Vaishnava missile incident was modelled subsequently to introduce a miraculous element and deify Krishna.

On Day 4 Bhima makes his first kill of the Dhartarashtras: Senapati, followed by seven more. When Duryodhana asks Bhishmȧ to explain the secret behind the Pandavas' success, he is told about the Pancharatra cult. Bhishma's account of the creation of the four *varnas* harks back to the hymn to Purusha in the *Rig Veda*. An intriguing reference is made to Vishnu killing only Madhu, with no mention of Kaitava, and being called Janardana, the people-churner (it could be a reference to the wielding of the rod of punishment to control the wicked, which Arjuna later celebrates as the foundation of dharma). Duryodhana is uncharacteristically impressed and thinks highly of Krishna and the Pandavas–again a sure sign of interpolation.. The 3rd day incident, Bhishma's discourse to Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra extolling Krishna's divinity in VII.11 and, at the end of this book, Ashvatthama being similarly impressed by Vyasa's explanation that Krishna is Narayana who is Rudra are obvious Vaishnavite interpolations.

Sanjaya minces no words in telling home truths to Dhritarashtra, reading him a lecture (VI.65.22-26) in the law of karma– reaping as he has sown, suffering the fruits of his own misdeeds, tasting the fruit in this life and later. Often he repeats his admonition that the king is like a dying man refusing medicine and that he ought not to blame his son now for his own sins of commission and omission. He also explains that Krishna decided war was the only option on finding that despite his proposing peace the blind king was devious in dharma and, motivated by envy of the Pandavas, persisted in making crooked plans against them (VII.114.51-53).

In the battle descriptions certain formulaic metaphors occur frequently, such as of son and father, brothers, nephew and maternal uncle non-recognition and mutual slaughter, the horrific river of blood, wounded warriors looking like flames-of-the-forest etc. The reader is often taken aback by Vyasa's use of conceits

where two completely different objects are brought into violent conjunction: an arrow stuck in the forehead is like a lotus on a long stem; elephants drag chariots as if uprooting lotuses in a lake, the Kaurava army is vulnerable as a tipsy girl on a highway or standing senseless like a lovely limbed weak willed girl, the battlefield is as beautiful as the autumn sky flecked with red sunset clouds, or a haunting sight, glowing everywhere with softly flaming fires of blood stained armour and gold ornaments; littered with handsome faces with well-trimmed beards and ornamented, the earth looks like the sky scintillating with stars or like a lovely girl adorned with multiple jewels, strewn with golden girdles, glittering necklaces, gold-plated darts, golden breastplates. Arrows speed gracefully like flocks of birds settling on a tree with delicious fruit or slide into a body like swans gliding into the waters of a lake, or shoot up like birds from trees at early dawn. The princes slain by Abhimanyu are like five-year-old mango trees about to fruit shattered by a severe storm. Warriors pierced with golden-feathered arrows are like trees full of glow-worms. The transcreator lends a fine Shakespearean touch to the description of supine heroes who, "though dead, looked as if they were alive" (VI.96.54). An unusual image surfaces on Day-9 of the Pandavas chasing Bhishma like the Asuras attacking Indra and, conversely, like the gods staring at Danava Vipracitti, facing Bhishma who is Death (VI.108.34, 39). The ineffable beauty of the description of exhausted warriors lying asleep and of the rising moon spreading its radiance over the battlefield (VII.184) is brought into violent clash with the blood-letting that follows. There is the unique passage of pathos embedded in the narrative when Duryodhana recalls the sweet childhood days Satyaki and he shared when he faces him in battle.

In VI.110.31 we come across a lost myth of Indra fighting the Asura Maya. The duel with Shrutayudha becomes the occasion for recounting the mini-myth of Varuna's wondrous mace (Krishna's Kaumodaki mace and Sudarshana chakra are also Varuna's gifts). The brief battle with Shrutayu that follows has one of those extremely rare instances of Arjuna fainting (VII.93.12-19). VI.90 supplements the account of the Arjuna-Ulupi romance in the Sabha Parva. In recounting Iravat's history, Sanjaya states that Garuda having killed Ulupi's husband, she was in despair. Her father Airavata gave her to Arjuna, whom she desired. Iravat, abandoned by his wicked maternal uncle who hated Arjuna

(possibly Takshaka), met his father in Indra's realm and was requested to join the war. Curiously, Babhruvahana does not join his father in the battle. Iravat is the first Pandava scion to die, killed by the rakshasa Alambusha in the form of a garuda. Iravat is a very important figure in the south Indian cult of Draupadi, where, because his body carries all the auspicious signs, he becomes a willing sacrifice prior to the war to ensure the victory of the Pandavas. In the *Drona Parva* first Arjuna and then Bhima lose their sons, while Ghatotkacha loses his son Anjanaparva to Ashvatthama.

There is a misconception that Abhimanyu fighting six warriors alone is a unique situation. We find Bhurishravas taking on Satyaki's ten sons simultaneously and beheading the lot. Bhishma is attacked by 6 or 7 warriors together frequently. In VI.86.16 there is a circular stranglehold of chariots around Bhishma, similar to what Abhimanyu faces. The difference is that where, in the Bhishma Parva, Abhimanyu pierces through the Kaurava ranks, leading Draupadi's sons, the five Kekayas (sons of Kunti's sister) and Dhrishtaketu in a needle-point formation to rescue Bhima, the latter is unable to replicate this in the Drona Parva where Jayadratha frustrates all attempts to aid Abhimanyu.

The special regard Krishna has for Arjuna is brought out more than once in these two books. In VI.107.36 Krishna tells Yudhishthira:

> "Arjuna is my sakha
> my love-and-loving friend,
> my relative and pupil.
> I will cut off my flesh
> for Phalguna."

In VII.79 he tells Daruka that the world means nothing to him without Arjuna and whoever injures him, harms Krishna, for Arjuna is half of him. In VII.182.43-44 he tells Satyaki that his parents, brothers, his own life are less dear to him than Arjuna, and that he would not want to possess at the cost of losing Arjuna something more precious than all the three worlds. An interesting parallel to this duo (often called the two Krishnas on one chariot, as in VI.81.41) occurs when Dhrishtadyumna exclaims (VI.77.31-34) that life is meaningless without Bhima, "my sakha, my loved-and-loving friend, my devoted bhakta as I am his". Like Arjuna in the Virata Parva, Dhristadyumna uses a special weapon to make

the Kauravas fall senseless (VI.77.48).

At the end of Day 8, which goes very badly for Duryodhana, with many of his brothers slaughtered, he reproaches Karna for standing aside. Defying the much-touted virtue of undying loyalty to his friend, Karna's pride takes precedence and he stands firm on not joining so long as Bhishma fights. It is this egotistical obduracy that erodes whatever chances Duryodhana has to win the war in the first ten days. Karna's much-vaunted heroism stands exposed as he has to flee the field several times. Even Dhritarashtra exclaims that he has lost every battle fought against the Pandavas, "But my stupid son seems to be unaware of this" (VII.133.9). Kripa mocks him for his empty bombast and when he insults Kripa, Ashvatthama pounces on him with drawn sword recounting how he has often been routed (VII.158).

Bhishma is truly a man at war with himself: he will neither kill any Pandava, nor will he stand aside from fighting for Duryodhana. He insults Karna grossly, ensuring that he opts out of battle. It is as if he were hoping to cause so much slaughter that, exhausted, both sides will agree to disengage. Otherwise why should he go on killing for the longest period among any of the Kaurava generals? Day 10 is a deeply moving narrative, with Bhishma repeatedly urging Yudhishthira to kill him as he has lost the desire to live (VI.115.15). The battle rages around him as if the patriarch were the stake in a dice-game. Turning away from Shikhandi, Bhishma smiles and tells Duhshasana that the arrows wounding him mortally must be Arjuna's and cannot be Shikhandi's for they strike his weakest spots deep, "Like baby-crabs emerging/ after cannibalizing their mother/they are devouring me" (VI.119.66). Ultimately, there is not even two-fingers-breadth of exposed skin left on his body!

Curiously, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari make no move to meet the fallen patriarch until the war gets over, which argues for his having been killed as indeed is often stated quite bluntly. At the end of the *Bhishma Parva* and again at the beginning of the *Drona Parva* Sanjaya describes Karna rushing to meet the fallen Bhishma to get his permission to fight. The patriarch unveils for him the secret of his parentage which Karna already knows from Krishna. Bhishma considers his birth *adharmika*, *jatohasi dharmalopena.* It may very well indicate that the story of the god Surya engendering him was not believed by the patriarch who frowned upon this instance of unwed motherhood. Bhishma tells Karna that such a

birth warped his discrimination so that he chose to mix with the mean and was jealous of the noble (VI.122.12-13). Though Arjuna's equal, these undermined him. This is substantiated in the *Drona Parva* when Arjuna berates Karna for his ignoble conduct in abusing Bhima although the latter had never spoken a harsh word to him despite uncharioting him repeatedly:

> "You must have a low mind
> To speak as you do.
> You say things
> That should never be said." (VII.148.19-23)

Karna's response to Bhishma is that of a tragic hero: fate is inevitable, struggle cannot overcome it, but he is obliged to pay with his life for the favours received. When Duryodhana complains about Drona's failures, Karna's reply sounds surprisingly like Krishna's to Arjuna on performing kartavyam karma:

> "Do your duty,
> And do it fearlessly.
> Whether what you do
> Succeeds or fails–
> That's in the hands of fate." (VII.152.31)

Envy of the much younger Arjuna is the driving force of his being and he remains obsessively true to his "sva-dharma" of being the egotistical sublime till the bitter end. We recall that Duryodhana had declared him ruler of Anga, but here we come across Bhima killing the ruler of Anga who is called a "mleccha" (VII.26.17).

Duryodhana's soldiers can only imagine Karna as Bhishma's replacement, not Drona. Karna discerns that he may not be universally acceptable as the commander and, for once swallowing his pride and listening to reason, advises the reluctant Duryodhana to install as Bhishma's successor the guru: "Ear-long white hair,/ shyama-dark the complexion, eighty-five years old,/Drona moved like a boy of sixteen" (VII.125.73)–a description Sanjaya repeats when he is beheaded (VII.192.64-65). With this the horrors of war abruptly exacerbate. The first warning bell is rung with Satyaki beheading the armless, meditating Bhurishrava, presaging the manner of Drona's death. That incident reveals that strong opposing views prevailed about the Vrishnis. When Arjuna suddenly intervenes in the duel and slices off his arm, Bhurishravas is astonished at his uncharacteristic conduct and attributes it to his

keeping company with the Vrishnis and Adhakas who "are mean and vicious" and making them his models (VII.143.16). Sanjaya counters this by extolling the nobility and virtue of the Vrishnis to explain their invincibility to Dhritarashtra (VII.144.26-32). Then there is the horrendous battle at night, fought by lamp-torch-and-moon-light. Next, six heroes combine to kill a sixteen year old. One cannot believe one's ears when the revered guru advises Karna to cut Abhimanyu's bow and armour from behind so that he can be killed. We recall how he played favourites, disabling Ekalavya and giving his own son special coaching, used his pupils to grab half of Drupada's kingdom (if he was such a mighty hero, why did he not do this by himself?), uttered no protest when Draupadi was abused. Bhima brutally tells him to his face that, obsessed by love for his son, he forgot his dharma of ahimsa to chase after wealth and killed thousands (VII.192.38-40). Drona is no different from Dhritarashtra in this respect. This is the person after whom India has named the award for its best sports coach! His brother-in-law Kripa (a foundling reared by Shantanu) is no better. Despite being the first guru of the family, not only does he join in the killing of the youth, but assists Ashvatthama in the horrific carnage of sleeping combatants. Strangely, Vyasa has not a single word to say against Kripa!

After Jayadratha is killed, a gruesome picture of the battlefield is described to Arjuna by Krishna (VII.148) which is comparable to that in the *Stri Parva.* Ghatotkacha and Alambusha's chariots are in a class apart, made of iron, of huge size, drawn by massive beasts and their duels are truly horripilating. Sauti may seem to be nodding when Alambusha, who has already been pummelled to death Bhima-style by Ghatotkacha (VII.109) is again beheaded by Satyaki (VII.140). However, in the latter instance, the rakshasa killed is "Alabala" according to the Critical Edition.

There is no epic evidence for the popular tale of Abhimanyu learning the secret of penetrating the discus formation while in Subhadra's womb. Arjuna's behaviour is most curious. He knows that his primary responsibility is to prevent Yudhishthira from being captured by Drona, yet when the Trigarta suicide-squad challenges him, he suddenly announces his vow never to refuse a challenge and follows them far away, resulting in Abhimanyu's death. Not only does Krishna remain silent, but later he praises Arjuna, as never elsewhere, for surpassing the gods in killing, single-handed, innumerable *samshaptakas.* Satyaki, Arjuna's

disciple, similarly suddenly recalls a vow to justify killing the meditating Bhurishrava. However, when Arjuna announces his vow to kill Jayadratha before sunset, Krishna does reprimand him for the rash decision taken without consulting him. In his dreams, Arjuna himself becomes apprehensive that he will fail and must commit suicide. This becomes the occasion for Krishna taking him to Shiva to obtain the Pashupata weapon. Once again at a critical juncture Shiva intervenes. However, it is a weapon never used except by Drona and is then ineffective! Similarly, when Ghatotkacha flings the spike-studded Rudra weapon at Karna, he throws it back at him incinerating the rakshasa's chariot.

Then comes the gut-churning killing of Abhimanyu, grandfather of the *yajamana* of the snake-holocaust during which the epic is recited. The reader should note that there has been no lamentation earlier when Abhimanyu killed Duryodhana's son Lakshmana. On Drona's advice, Karna slices the youth's bow from behind, Kritavarma kills his horses, Kripa slays his two escorts, Drona slices his sword, Karna shreds his shield, all jointly splinter the wheel he wields. Undeterred, Abhimanyu–Bhishma-like resembling a porcupine–attacks Ashvatthama who leaps away from his mace that pulverises his horses and both escorts. It is particularly puzzling that Duhshasana's son, who smashes to pulp the recumbent Abhimanyu's skull, should remain nameless and Vyasa never tells us what happened to him. One of the opponents Abhimanyu routs is of interest because of a possible historical reference: Paurava, whom van Buitenen links to Alexander's Poros. Another instance is when Satyaki routs the Shurasenas referred to by Megasthenes (VII.141.9). In a rare instance of puranic irony, the Surya dynasty of Ayodhya is wiped out by Abhimanyu, incarnation of Chandra's son, when he slays its last descendant Brihadbala. If we keep in mind the *Amsavatarana*, several conundrums surface where divinities clash, reminding us of the Iliad: Indra-Arjuna kills Vasu-Bhishma and Surya-Karna; Agni-Dhrishtadyumna kills Brihaspati-Drona and is killed by Shiva-Ashvatthama. Dhritarashtra's lament over Abhimanyu's death contains a cryptic statement in which lies the seed of a wonderful tale to be told later by Vidura to console the king that travelled over continents to be known in the Occident as the story of the man in the well told by Barlaam to Josephat: "In my eagerness to lick honey/I failed to foresee the fall from the tree." (VII.51.15)

The other major incident is Krishna getting Karna to expend his infallible missile on Ghatotkacha. Following this, Vyasa paints for us a picture that is literally horripilating. Krishna roars with joy, hugs Arjuna repeatedly, thumps his back and dances about "like a tree swaying in the wind." Arjuna is shocked and the explanation provided needs to be read carefully. With his skin-armour and earrings and then with Indra's weapon, not even Krishna and Arjuna together could have defeated Karna. That is why Krishna did not allow Arjuna to face Karna so far (VII.147.34-35). In that context, section 148 is clearly inconsistent where, hearing Bhima's complaint of being abused by Karna, Arjuna goes up to him and reads him a lecture on his meanness of mind. Perceptively, the blind monarch exclaims,

> "When a dog and a boar fight
> It's the hunter who gains.
> In the clash between Karna
> And Hidimba's son Ghatotkaca,
> The winner was Vasudeva-Krishna." (VII.182.8)

To his question as to why Karna never used the infallible missile against Arjuna, Sanjaya responds that night after night he, Duryodhana, Shakuni and Duhshasana used to advise Karna to use it against Krishna, "the root of the Pandavas". But, during battle Krishna invariably confused them by making others face Karna. Sanjaya goes on to narrate that Satyaki also asked Krishna the same question and was told "It was I who confused/The son of Radha" (VII.182.40). Krishna now reveals (VII.181) that in order to lighten the balance of forces against Arjuna, he had systematically got rid of Jarasandha (who could be killed because Balarama destroyed his infallible mace), Shishupala and Ekalavya (this remains an untold tale) and would have killed Ghatotkacha one day since he was a dharma-destroyer:

> "I will destroy all
> Who destroy dharma...
> Brahma-sacred texts, truth, self-
> Control, purity, dharma, humility,
> Shri-prosperity, patience, constancy–
> Where these are,
> There I am." (VII.181.28-30)

Krishna's clarity of focus becomes unnerving at times, as when he urges Arjuna to kill Kritavarma–a Yadava–without consideration of the relationship. At such times we need to recollect that his career began with killing his maternal uncle, then his cousin Shishupala and that Ekalavya who is another cousin of his. Moreover, Kritavarma was a rival of Krishna for the hand of Satyabhama in the Syamantaka gem affair and was one of Abhimanyu's killers.

As we read the *parva* it becomes clear that stoking the flames of the Pandava-Dhartarashtra rivalry is the animosity between two classmates, Drona and Drupada, fed by the smouldering embers of the ancient Brahmin-Kshatriya conflict that Parashurama had drowned in lakes of kshatriya blood. When pressed to use his celestial weapons for victory, Drona agrees to do so, though aware that this is ignoble because the warriors are ignorant of these, to please Duryodhana. As he assures Duryodhana (VII.185.12), Parashurama's disciple Drona gives no quarter to the Panchalas. He kills his arch-enemy Drupada, the three sons of Dhristadyumna and Virata. The major allies of the Pandavas, two of their sons and one grandson are, thus, slaughtered by their guru and his son who will finally exterminate the entire Panchala clan. Curiously enough, none of the Pandavas mention Duhshasana's son as Abhimanyu's killer, not even Yudhishthira in his extremely significant complaint to Krishna that instead of attacking Drona, the architect of his son's death, Arjuna targeted Jayadratha who merely prevented help from reaching the youth. Yudhishthira is so infuriated that he sets out to kill Karna and has to be restrained by no less a person than Vyasa. Thereupon he commands Dhrishtadyumna to kill Drona whom Arjuna always bypasses. It is as though Krishna's sermon had not happened (which, indeed, may very well be the case in the Ur-text).

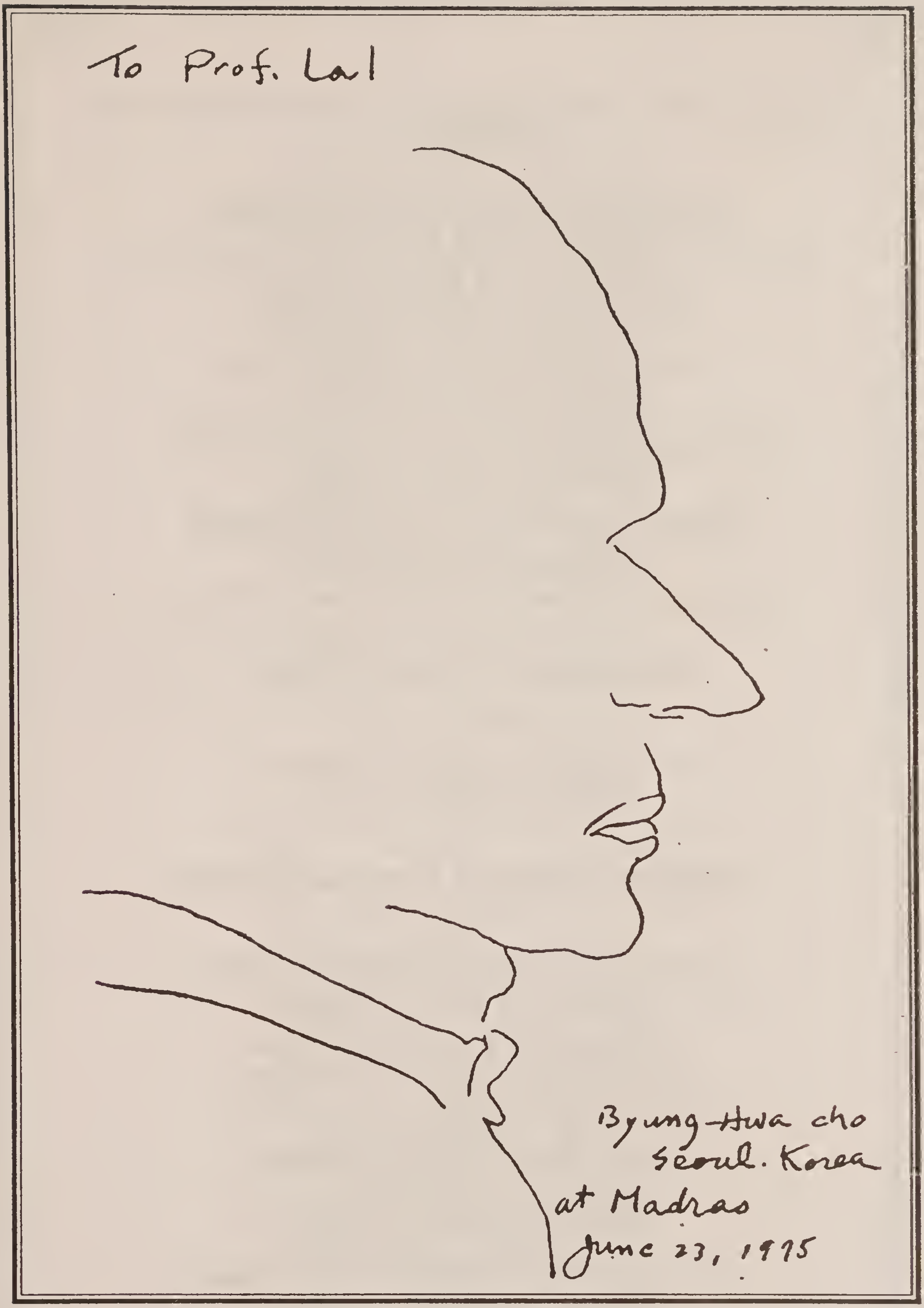
Sanjaya has a very revealing comment about the Pandavas when they jointly attack Drona. Bhima and the twins were "crooked-minded" and separated the Kauravas from the guru so that the Panchalas could kill him. Dhrishtadyumna cuts off the head of the meditating preceptor, just as Satyaki had beheaded Bhurishrava. Here it is important to dispel the popular misconception that following Yudhishthira's lie (it is interesting that Arjuna refused to do so), Drona laid down his weapons. Bankimchandra Chatterjee analysed the text at length in *Krishnacharitra* (1892) to show that Drona did not stop fighting

but began using the Brahmastra unethically. When Drona was rebuked by seers for the heinous act of using celestial weapons against those not conversant with them and directed to discard his weapons, he continued to destroy thirty thousand soldiers and even defeated Dhrishtadyumna who had to be rescued by Bhima. It is only after Bhima abused him for abandoning his dharma out of greed for the sake of his son that he discarded weapons. There was, therefore, no impact of the false news of Ashvatthama's death. Neither the *Anukramanika* nor the *Parvasamgraha* refer to it. Krishna's narrative to his father in the Ashvamedhika states that the guru was worn out by the strain of battle. On a very sound basis, therefore, Bankimchandra classified it as an interpolation. After his father's death, Ashvatthama erupts in fury but, disorientated at Arjuna foiling his Agneya missile, he flees to Vyasa for an explanation. Hearing that Narayana, who is Krishna, is one with Rudra (whose devotee Ashvatthama is), he retreats with his army. The parva ends, ominously, with an elaborate paean to Rudra, the *shatarudriya* chant.

Bhishma's fall had not led to any acrimony, but now Arjuna bitterly berates his brother-in-law for killing the guru and is soundly reprimanded in return. The Pandava camp now erupts in violence, bursting through the lid of compromise Krishna repeatedly weighs down over the seething cauldron of hidden agenda. Arjuna blames Yudhishthira and Dhristhadyumna who retorts and then Satyaki and the Panchala prince trade insults and come to blows, having to be restrained by Bhima and Sahadeva with great difficulty. Dhrishtadyumna bluntly states that both sides have used adharma as convenient for the sake of victory. Worse is to come in the Karna Parva where the smouldering resentment among the brothers, only a spark of which emerged during the game of dice, bursts out into the open.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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WRITERS WORKSHOP
Indian Creative Writing in English

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using territories. Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045, India, and diffusion done through a series of Bird-logo books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since October 1999 the Sunday one-hour morning session is devoted to a śloka-by-śloka reading by P. Lal at the Sanskriti Sagar Library in Calcutta, of his complete English transcreation of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa, planned to continue for the next ten years, till the epic is completed. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 90-page illustrated checklist of over 3200 books and cassettes is available for Rs. 20.

The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It involves writers who are sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre. Not impressed by desire for quick fame and money by pandering to the increasing sexual over-permissiveness and explicitness in 20th and 21st century "literature", and religious intolerance and hatred masquerading as "freedom in creative writing", WRITERS WORKSHOP upholds the primacy of stable ethical and moral values, and prefers writing that enshrines humanist principles, which are of special relevance in the context of the multi-cultural historical palimpsest of the civilisation known as India.

Further details are available from the Director, P. Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700045, India (Phone: 2417-4325, 2417-2683 and 3095-9727 E-mail: profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in) Browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2008. I am four score. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 49 years 1958-2007), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

For more information, browse in the WW IndEngLit Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

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